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A MATTER OF HONOUR

Jeffrey Archer

Jeffrey Archer is a master story-teller, the author of six novels which have all been worldwide bestsellers. NOT A PENNY MORE, NOT A PENNY LESS was his first book, which achieved instant success. Next came the tense and terrifying thriller SHALL WE TELL THE PRESIDENT?

A MATTER OF HONOUR

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The characters and situations in this book are entirely imaginary and bear no relation to any real person or actual happening

CHAPTER ONE

THE KREMLIN, MOSCOW

May 19, 196(

"It's a fake," said the Russian leader, staring down at th small exquisite painting he held in his hands.

"That isn't possible," replied his Politburo colleague "Th Tsar's icon of St George and the Dragon has been in th Winter Palace at Leningrad under heavy guard for over fif years "

"True, Comrade Zaborski," said the old man, "but for fif years we've been guarding a fake. The Tsar must have remove the original some time before the Red Army entered St Peter burg and overran the Winter Palace "

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MOSCOW

May 19, 1966

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એક સદસ્યશ્રી દ્વારા સપ્રેમ ભેટ
(દિનાંક 29-(

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"Because, *my dear Zaborski, during the past ei* months, the age of all the treasures in the Winter Pala been tested by carbon-dating, the modern scientific p that does not call for a second opinion," said Brezhnev, d ing his new-found knowledge. "And what we have : thought to be one of the nation's masterpieces," he con "turns out to have been painted five hundred year Rublev's original."

"But by whom and for what purpose?" asked the Chairman of State Security, incredulous

"The experts tell me it was probably a court painter," replied the Russian leader, "who must have been commissioned to execute the copy only months before the Revolution took place It has always worried the curator at the Winter Palace that the Tsar's traditional silver crown was not attached to the back of the frame, as it was to all his other masterpieces," added Brezhnev

"But I always thought that the silver crown had been removed by a souvenir hunter even before we had entered St Petersburg "

"No," said the General Secretary drily, his bushy eyebrows rising every time he had completed a statement "It wasn't the Tsar's silver crown that had been removed, but the painting itself "

"Then what can the Tsar have done with the original?" the Chairman said, almost as if he were asking himself the question

"That is exactly what I want to know, Comrade," said Brezhnev, resting his hands each side of the little painting that remained in front of him "And you are the one who has been chosen to come up with the answer," he added

For the first time the Chairman of the KGB looked unsure of himself

"But do you have anything for me to go on?"

"Very little," admitted the General Secretary, flicking open a file that he removed from the top drawer of his desk He stared down at the closely typed notes headed 'The Significance of the Icon in Russian History' Someone had been up all through the night preparing a ten-page report that the leader had only found time to scan. Brezhnev's real interest began on page four He quickly turned over the first three pages before reading

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cretary," said the head of the KGB, trying to disguise his belief, "I could so easily end up spending far more than the inting is worth "

"That would not be possible," said Brezhnev, pausing for ect, "because it's not the icon itself that I'm after " He rned his back on the Chairman of State Security and stared it of the window He had always disliked not being able to e over the Kremlin wall and into Red Square He waited for ne moments before he proclaimed, "The money the Tsar ght have raised from selling such a masterpiece would only ve kept Nicholas in his accustomed lifestyle for a matter of onths, perhaps a year at the most No, it's what we believe e Tsar had secreted *inside* the icon that would have guaran-ed *security for himself and his family for the rest of their* ys."

A little circle of condensation formed on the window pane front of the General Secretary

"What could possibly be that valuable?" asked the Chair-an.

"Do you remember, Comrade, what the Tsar promised enin in exchange for his life?"

"Yes, but it turned out to be a bluff because no such ocument was hidden ." He stopped himself just before ying "in the icon"

Zaborski stood silently, unable to witness Brezhnev's tri-mphant smile

"You have caught up with me at last Comrade You see, the

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"What could possibly be that valuable?" asked the Chairman

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"Yes, but it turned out to be a bluff because no such document was hidden " He stopped himself just before saying "in the icon"

Zabovski stood silently, unable to witness Brezhnev's tri-

up with me at last Comrade You see, the

document was hidden in the icon all the time We just had the wrong icon "

The Russian leader waited for some time before he turned back and passed over to his colleague a single sheet of paper "This is the Tsar's testimony indicating what we would find hidden in the icon of St George and the Dragon At the time, nothing was discovered in the icon which only convinced Lenin that it had been a pathetic bluff by the Tsar to save his family from execution "

Zaborski slowly read the hand written testimony that had been signed by the Tsar hours before his execution Zaborski's hands began to tremble and a bead of sweat appeared on his forehead long before he had reached the last paragraph He looked across at the tiny painting, no larger than a book, that remained in the centre of the Chairman's desk

"Not since the death of Lenin," continued Brezhnev, "has anyone believed the Tsar's claim But now, there can be little doubt that if we are able to locate the genuine masterpiece, we will undoubtedly also be in possession of the promised document "

"And with the authority of those who signed that document, no one could question our legal claim," said Zaborski

"That would undoubtedly prove to be the case, Comrade Chairman," replied the Russian leader "And I also feel confident that we would receive the backing of the United Nations and the World Court if the Americans tried to deny us our right. But I fear time is now against us "

"Why?" asked the Chairman of State Security

"Look at the completion date in the Tsar's testimony and you will see how much time we have left to honour our part of the agreement," said Brezhnev

Zaborski stared down at the date scrawled in the hand of the Tsar – June 20, 1966 He handed back the testimony as he considered the enormity of the task with which his leader had entrusted him Leonid Ilyich Brezhnev continued his monologue

"So, as you can see, Comrade Zaborski, we have only one month left before the deadline, but if you can discover the

whereabouts of the original icon, President Johnson's defence strategy would be rendered virtually useless, and the United States would then become a pawn on the Russian chessboard "

And to my dearly beloved and only son, Captain Adam Scott, IC, I bequeath the sum of five hundred pounds "

Although Adam had anticipated the amount would be pai-l, he nevertheless remained bolt upright in his chair as the dicitor glanced over his half-moon spectacles

The old lawyer who was seated behind the large partners' esk raised his head and blinked at the handsome young man efore him Adam put a hand nervously through his thick ack hair, suddenly conscious of the lawyer's stare Then Mr olbrooke's eyes returned to the papers in front of him

"And to my dearly beloved daughter, Margaret Scott, I equeath the sum of four hundred pounds " Adam was unable prevent a small grin spreading across his face Even in the *inutiae of his final act, father had remained a chauvinist*

"To the Hampshire County Cricket Club," droned on Mr olbrooke unperturbed by Miss Scott's relative misfortunes, wenty-five pounds, life membership " Finally paid up, ought Adam "To the Old Contemptibles, fifteen pounds

[illegible]

"And finally, to my [illegible] wife Susan, our marital *ome, and the remainder of my estate* "

Th s pronouncement made Adam want to laugh out loud

because he doubted if the remainder of Pa's [illegible]
sold his premium bonds and the pre-war golf clubs, amount
to more than another thousand pounds

But mother was a daughter of the Regiment and would
complain, she never did. If God ever announced the saints,
opposed to some Pope in Rome, Saint Susan of Applesh
would be up there with Mary and Elizabeth All through
life 'Pa', as Adam always thought of him, had set such hi
standards for the family to live up to Perhaps that was w
Adam continued to admire him above all men Sometimes
very thought made him feel strangely out of place in
swinging sixties

Adam began to move restlessly in his chair, assuming t
the proceedings were now drawing to a close The sooner
were all out of this cold, drab little office the better, he felt

Mr Holbrooke looked up once more and cleared his thro
as if he were about to announce who was to be left
Goya or the Hapsburg diamonds He pushed his half-mo
spectacles further up the bridge of his nose and stared b
down at the last paragraphs of his late client's testament
three surviving members of the Scott family sat in silen
What could he have to add? thought Adam

Whatever it was, the solicitor had obviously pondered
final bequest several times, because he delivered the wo
like a well-versed actor, his eyes returning to the script o
once

"And I also leave to my son," Mr Holbrooke paused, "
enclosed envelope," he said, holding it up, "which I can o
hope will bring him greater happiness than it did me Sho
he decide to open the envelope it must be on the condit
that he [illegible]

distress? Adam couldn't decide. Without another word,
Holbrooke passed the yellowed envelope over to the Color
only son

Everyone in the room remained seated, not quite [illegible]

to do next Mr Holbrooke finally closed the thin file marked Colonel Gerald Scott, DSO, OBE, MC, pushed back his chair and walked slowly over to the widow They shook hands and she said, "Thank you," a faintly ridiculous courtesy, Adam felt, as the only person in the room who had made any sort of profit on this particular transaction had been Mr Holbrooke, and that on behalf of Holbrooke, Holbrooke and Gascoigne

He rose and went quickly to his mother's side

"You'll join us for tea, Mr Holbrooke?" she was asking

"I fear not, dear lady," the lawyer began, but Adam didn't bother to listen further Obviously the fee hadn't been large enough to cover Holbrooke taking time off for tea

Once they had left the office and Adam had ensured his mother and sister were seated comfortably in the back of the family Morris Minor, he took his place behind the steering wheel He had parked outside Mr Holbrooke's office in the middle of the High Street No yellow lines in the streets of [illegible] before he had switched on

[illegible] e'll

[illegible] w,

[illegible] of-

ingly, but in a voice that accepted that her mother was right "I wonder what can be in that envelope, Adam," she added, wanting to change the subject

"Detailed instructions on how to invest my five hundred pounds, no doubt," said her brother, attempting to lighten their mood

[illegible] the

[illegible]

a whisper

Adam's lips pursed when he realised this must be *the* envelope his father had referred to all those years ago when he had witnessed the one row between his parents that he had ever experienced Adam still remembered his father's raised voice and angry words just a few days after he had returned from Germany

"I have to open it, don't you understand?" Pa had insisted "Never," his mother had replied "After all the sacrifices I ve made, you at least owe me that "

Over twenty years had passed since that confrontation and had never heard the subject referred to again The only me Adam ever mentioned it to his sister she could throw no ght on what the dispute might have been over

Adam put his foot on the brake as they reached a T-junction the end of the High Street

He turned right and continued to drive out of the village for mile or so down a winding country lane before bringing the ld Morris Minor to a halt Adam leapt out and opened the ellised gate whose path led through a neat lawn to a little hatched cottage

"I'm sure you ought to be getting back to London, were is mother's first words as she entered the drawing room

"I'm in no hurry, mother There's nothing that can't wait until tomorrow "

"Just as you wish, my dear, but you don't have to worry yourself over me," his mother continued She stared up at the tall young man who reminded her so much of Gerald He would have been as good-looking as her husband if it wasn't for the slight break in his nose The same dark hair and deep brown eyes, the same open, honest face, even the same gentle approach to everyone he came across But most of all the same high standards of morality that had brought them to their present sad state "And in any case I've always got Margaret to take care of me," she added Adam looked across at his sister and wondered how she would now cope with Saint Susan of Appleshaw

Margaret had recently become engaged to a City stockbroker, and although the marriage had been postponed, she would soon be wanting to start a life of her own Thank God her fiancé had already put a down-payment on a little house only fourteen miles away

After [illegible] a sad uninterrupted monologue from his mo[illegible] es and misfortunes of their father, Margaret [illegible] ft the two of them alone They had both

lifetime overhearing the snide comments of lesser men and suffering the side-long glances from those officers who had made sure they were not seen too regularly in his company Petty men with petty minds Adam knew his father far too well to believe, even for a moment, that he could have been involved in such treachery as was whispered Adam took one hand off the handle bars and fingered the envelope in his inside pocket like a schoolboy the day before his birthday feeling the shape of a present in the hope of discovering some clue as to its contents He felt certain that whatever it contained would not be to anyone's advantage now his father was dead, but it did not lessen his curiosity

He tried to piece together the few facts he had been told over the years In 1946, within a year of his fiftieth birthday, his father had resigned his commission from the army *The Times* had described Pa as a brilliant tactical officer with a courageous war record His resignation had been a decision that had surprised *The Times* correspondent, astonished his immediate family and shocked his regiment, as it had been assumed by all who knew him that it was only a matter of months before crossed swords and a baton would have been sewn on to his epaulette

Because of the colonel's sudden and unexplained departure from the regiment [illegible]

After leaving school, Adam was offered a place at the [illegible] Military Academy, Sandhurst During his days at the R[illegible] Adam was to be found diligently studying military his

tactics, and battle procedure while at weekends he c
trated on rugby and squash, although his greatest succe
whenever he completed the different cross-country co
encountered. For two years, painting cadets from Craw
Dartmouth only saw his mud-spattered back as Adam
on to become the Inter-Services champion. He also b
the middleweight boxing champion despite a Nigeria
breaking his nose in the first round of the final. The N
made the mistake of assuming the fight was already o

When Adam passed out of Sandhurst in August 1
managed ninth place in the academic order of merit,
leadership and example outside the classroom was s
no one was surprised when he was awarded the S
Honour. Adam never doubted from that moment h
now follow his father and command the regiment.

The Royal Wessex Regiment accepted the colonel's s
after he had been awarded his regular commission
quickly gained the respect of the soldiers and popular
those officers whose currency was not to deal in rumo
tactical officer in the field he had no equal, and when
to combat duty it was clear he had inherited his
courage. Yet, when six years later the War Office p
in the *London Gazette* the names of those subalterns
been made up to Captain, Lieutenant Adam Scott
to be found on the list. His contemporaries were g
surprised, while senior officers of the regiment remain
lipped. To Adam it was becoming abundantly clear
was not to be allowed to atone for whatever it was h
was thought to have done.

Eventually Adam was made up to captain, but no
he had distinguished himself in the Malayan jungle
to-hand fighting against the never-ending waves of
soldiers. Having been captured and held prisoner

assed his staff exam but still failed to be offered a regimental place at the staff college, he finally accepted he could never hope to command the regiment He resigned his commission a few weeks later; there was no need to suggest that the reason he had done so was because he needed to earn more money.

While he was serving out his last few months with the regiment, Adam learned from his mother that Pa only had weeks to live Adam made the decision not to inform his father of his resignation He knew Pa would only blame himself and he was at least thankful that he had died without being aware of the stigma that had become part of his son's daily life

When Adam reached the outskirts of London his mind returned, as it had so often lately, to the pressing problem of ing himself gainful employment In the seven weeks he been out of work Adam had already had more interviews his bank manager than with prospective employers It true that he had another meeting lined up with the Foreign ce, but he had been impressed by the standard of the other didates he had encountered on the way, and was only too re of his lack of a university qualification However, he felt first interview had gone well and he had been quickly made re of how many ex-officers had joined the service When discovered that the chairman of the selection board had a litary Cross, Adam assumed he wasn't being considered for k work

As he swung the motorbike into the King's Road Adam e again fingered the envelope in his inside jacket pocket ping, uncharitably, that Lawrence would not yet have rened from the bank Not that he could complain his old ool friend had been extremely generous in offering him such pleasant room in his spacious flat for only four pounds a ek.

"You can start paying more when they make you an bassador," Lawrence had told him

"You're beginning to sound like Rachmann," Adam had torted, grinning at the man he had so admired during their ys at Wellington For Lawrence – in direct contrast to Adam everything seemed to come so easily – exams, jobs, sport and

women, especially women When he had won [illegible]
Balliol and gone on to take a first in PPE, no one was surprised
But when Lawrence chose banking as a profession, his
poraries were unable to hide their disbelief. It seem
the first time he had embarked on anything that
described as mundane

Adam parked his motorbike just off Ifield Road, av
like his mother's old Morris Minor, it would have to
if the Foreign Office job didn't materialise As he
towards the flat a girl who passed gave him a second
didn't notice He took the stairs in threes and had rea
fifth floor, and was pushing his Yale key into the lock
voice from inside shouted, "It's on the latch"

"Damn," said Adam under his breath

"How did it go?" were Lawrence's first words as he
the drawing room

"Very well, considering," Adam replied, not quite s
else he could say as he smiled at his flatmate Lawre
already changed from his City clothes into a blazer a
flannels He was slightly shorter and stockier than Ad
a head of wiry fair hair, a massive forehead and grey the
eyes that always seemed to be enquiring

"I admired your father so much," he added "He
assumed one had the same standards as he did," Ada
still remember nervously introducing Lawrence to his
one Speech Day They had become friends immediatt
then Lawrence was not a man who dealt in rumours.

"Able to retire on the family fortune, are we?"
Lawrence in a lighter vein

"Only if that dubious bank you work for has found
of converting five hundred pounds into five thousan
matter of days"

"Can't manage it at the present time, old chum
now Harold Wilson has announced a standstill in wag
prices"

Adam smiled as he looked across at his friend All
taller than him now, he could still recall those days
Lawrence seemed to him like a giant

Late again, Scott," he would say as Adam scampered past
n in the corridor Adam had looked forward to the day when
could do everything in the same relaxed, superior style Or
s it just that Lawrence was superior? His suits always
med to be well-pressed, his shoes always shone and he never
d a hair out of place Adam still hadn't fathomed out how
did it all so effortlessly

Adam heard the bathroom door open He glanced interroga-
ely towards Lawrence

"It's Carolyn," whispered Lawrence "She'll be staying the
ght I think."

When Carolyn entered the room Adam smiled shyly at the
l, beautiful woman Her long, blonde hair bounced on her
oulders as she walked towards them, but it was the faultless
ure that most men couldn't take their eyes off How did
wrence manage it?

"Care to join us for a meal?" asked Lawrence, putting his
m round Carolyn's shoulder, his voice suddenly sounding a
tle *too* enthusiastic. "I've discovered this Italian restaurant
at's just opened in the Fulham Road "

"I might join you later," said Adam, "but I still have one
two papers left over from this afternoon that I ought to
eck through "

"Forget the finer details of your inheritance, my boy Why not
an us and spend the entire windfall in one wild spaghetti fling?"

"Oh, have you been left lots of lovely lolly?" asked Carolyn,
a voice so shrill and high-pitched nobody would have been
arprised to learn that she had recently been Deb of the Year

"Not," said Adam, "when considered against my present
verdraft."

Adam didn't move until he was sure he could hear her penetrating voice relaying on the staircase. Satisfied he retreated to his bedroom and locked himself in. Adam sat down on the one comfortable chair he possessed and pulled his father's envelope out of his inside pocket. It was the heavy, expensive type of stationery he had always used, purchasing it at Smythson of Bond Street at almost twice the price he could have obtained them at the local W. H. Smith's. 'Captain Adam Scott, MC,' was written in his father's neat copperplate hand.

Adam opened the envelope carefully, his hand shaking slightly, and extracted the contents: a letter in his father's unmistakable hand and a smaller envelope which was clearly old as it was faded with time. Written on the old envelope in an unfamiliar hand were the words 'Colonel Gerald Scott' in faded ink of indeterminate colour. Adam placed the old envelope on the little table by his side and, unfolding his father's letter, began to read. It was undated.

My dear Adam,

Over the years you will have heard many explanations for my sudden departure from the regiment. Most of them will have been farcical, and a few of them slanderous, but I always considered it better for all concerned to keep my own counsel. I feel, however, that I owe you a fuller explanation and that is what this letter will set out to do.

As you know, my last posting before I resigned my commission was at Nuremberg from February 1945 to October 1946. After four years of almost continuous action in the field, I was given the task of commanding the British section

the three other officers I have previously mentioned, here was a man I detested from the first moment I came across him I found him arrogant, overbearing and totally without shame about the barbaric acts he had carried out in the name of war And I never once found any reason to change my opinion of him In fact, I sometimes wondered how I controlled my temper when I was in his presence

The night before Goering was due to be executed, he requested a private meeting with me It was a Monday, and I can still recall every detail of that encounter as if it were only yesterday I received the request when I took over the Russian watch from Major Vladimir Kosky In fact Kosky personally handed me the written request. As soon as I had [illegible]

[illegible]

brick cell always made me shudder

"You asked to see me?" I said I never could get myself to address him by his name or rank

"Yes," he replied "It was kind of you to come in person, Colonel I simply wish to make the last request of a man condemned to death Would it be possible for the corporal to leave us?"

Imagining it was something highly personal I asked the corporal to wait outside I confess I had no idea what could be so private when the man only had hours to live but as the door closed he saluted again and then passed over the envelope you now have in your possession As I took it, all he said was, "Would you be good enough not to open this until after my execution tomorrow" He then added, "I can only hope it will compensate for any blame that might later be placed on your shoulders" I had no idea what he could be alluding to at the time and presumed some form of

mental instability had overtaken him Many of the prisoners confided in me during their last few days, and towards the end, some of them were undoubtedly on the verge of madness

dam stopped to consider what he would have done in the me circumstances, and decided to read on to discover if ther and son would have taken the same course.

However, Goering's final words to me as I left his cell seemed hardly those of a madman He said quite simply "Be assured It is a masterpiece, do not underestimate its value Then he lit up a cigar as if he was relaxing at his club after a rather good dinner We all had different theories as to who smuggled the cigars in for him, and equally wondered what might also have been smuggled out from time to time

I placed the envelope in my jacket pocket and left him to join the corporal in the corridor We then checked the other cells to see that all the prisoners were locked up for the night The inspection completed, I returned to my office As I was satisfied that there were no more immediate duties I settled down to make out my report I left the envelope in the jacket pocket of my uniform with every intention of opening it immediately after Goering's execution had been carried out the following morning I was checking over the orders of the day when the corporal rushed into my office without knocking It's Goering sir it's Goering he said, frantically From the panic on the man's face, I didn't need to ask for any details We both ran all the way back to the Reichsmarshal's cell

I found Goering lying face downwards on his bunk I turned him over to find he was already dead In the rush to get at immediately I had forgotten I quite forgot Goering's letter Indeed, it was a few days later she went that he had died from poisoning the court came to the conclusion that the cyanide capsule that had been found in his body must have been implanted in one of his cigars

elivered the correct verdict in his case and that he justly eserved to be hanged for the part he had played in the ar

So stung was I by the continual behind-the-back accuations that I might have helped Goering to an easy death by smuggling in the cigars that I felt the only honourable hing to do in the circumstances was to resign my commission immediately for fear of bringing further dishonour to the regiment When I returned to England later that year, and finally decided to throw out my old uniform, I came across the envelope again When I explained to your mother the details of the incident she begged me to destroy the envelope as she considered it had brought enough dishonour to our family already, and even if it did point to whoever had been responsible for helping Goering to his suicide, in her opinion such knowledge could no longer do anyone any good I agreed to comply with her wishes and although I never opened the envelope I could never get myself to destroy it, remembering the last sentence Goering had uttered about it being a masterpiece And so finally I hid it among my personal papers

However, since the imagined sins of the father are inevitably visited upon the next generation, I feel no such qualms should influence you If there is therefore anything to be gained from the contents of this envelope I make only one request, namely that your mother should be the first to benefit from it without ever being allowed to know how such good fortune came about.

Over the years, I have watched your progress with considerable pride and feel confident that I can leave you to make the correct decision

If you are left in any doubt about opening the envelope yourself, destroy it without further consideration But if you open it discover its purpose is to involve you in some

mental instability had overtaken him Many of the prisoners confided in me during their last few days, and toward the end, some of them were undoubtedly on the verge of madness

Adam stopped to consider what he would have done in the same circumstances, and decided to read on to discover if father and son would have taken the same course

However, Goering's final words to me as I left his cell seemed hardly those of a madman He said quite simply "Be assured It is a masterpiece, do not underestimate its value " Then he lit up a cigar as if he was relaxing at his club after a rather good dinner We all had different theories as to who smuggled the cigars in for him, and equally wondered what might also have been smuggled out from time to time

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As I had been the last to see him alone and privately, it took only a few whispers before my name was linked with his death There was, of course, no truth in the accusation Indeed I never doubted for one moment that the court had delivered the correct verdict in his case and that he justly deserved to be hanged for the part he had played in the war

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If you are left in any doubt about openi[illegible] yourself, destroy it without further consi[illegible] only to discover its purpose is to [illegible]

CHAPTER THREE

As the black Chaika limousine drove out under the Spasskaya Bashnya and on to Red Square, two Kremlin guards in khaki uniforms sprang to attention and presented arms. A shrill whistle sounded which ensured that Yuri Efimovich Zaborski would experience no delays on his route back to Dzerzhinsky Square.

Zaborski touched the corner of his black felt hat in automatic acknowledgment of the salute although his thoughts were elsewhere. As the car rumbled over the cobbled stones, he didn't even glance at the long snake-like queue that stretched from Lenin's Tomb to the edge of Red Square. The first decision he had to make would undoubtedly be the most important: which of his senior operatives should be charged with the task of heading the team to find the Tsar's icon? He [illegible]

State Security had formed in his own mind a shortlist of two. Which of those two, Valchek or Romanov, should be given the nod still taxed him. In normal circumstances he would have spent at least a week making such a decision but the General Secretary's deadline of June 20 left him with no such freedom. He knew he would have to make the choice even before he reached his office. The driver cruised through another green light past the Ministry of Culture and into Cherkasskiy Bolshoy Pereulok lined with its imposing block-like, grey buildings. The car remained in the special inside lane that could be used only by senior Party officials. In England, he was amused

his hat Zaborski walked quickly to his desk The two files he had asked for were awaiting him He sat down and began to pore over Valchek's file When he had completed it, he barked out an order to his hovering secretary "Find Romanov '

Comrade Romanov lay flat on his back, his left arm behind his head and his opponent's right over his throat preparing for a double knee-thrust The coach executed it perfectly and Romanov groaned as he hit the floor with a thud

An attendant came rushing over to them and bent down to whisper in the coach's ear The coach reluctantly released his pupil who rose slowly as if in a daze, bowed to the coach and hen in one movement of right arm and left leg took the legs under him and left him flat on the gymnasium floor making his way quickly to the off-the-hook phone in

didn't notice the girl who handed him the phone him as soon as I have had a shower," was all she im say. The girl who had taken the call had often what Romanov looked like in the shower She, like in the office, had seen him in the gymnasium Six foot tall with that long, flowing blond resembled a Western film star And those eyes, the friend who shared her desk described them a scar on his , " the friend confided know that?" she had asked, but her friend in reply

meanwhile had opened Romanov's personal time, and was still perusing the details He "Ferent entries that made up a candid which Romanov would never see unless

Romanov, Born Leningrad, March 12, 1958

served on the Eastern in 1945 refused to

to learn that they had plans for such a traffic lane – but it would only be for the use of buses

The car came to an abrupt halt outside KGB headquarters It hadn't helped that they had been able to cover the three kilometre journey in less than four minutes The driver ran round and opened the back door to allow his master to step out but Zaborski didn't move The man who rarely changed his mind had already done so twice on the route back to Dzerzhinsky Square He knew he could call on any number of bureaucrats and academics to do the spade work but someone with flair was going to have to lead them and be responsible for reporting back to him

His professional intuition told him to select Yuri Valchek, who had proved over the years to be a trusty and reliable servant of the State He was also one of the Chairman's longest serving heads of department Slow, methodical and reliable, he had completed a full ten years as an agent in the field before confining himself to a desk job

In contrast, Alex Romanov, who had only recently become
ead of his own section, h wn flashes of brilliance in the
ield but they had been en outweighed by a lack of
ersonal judgment At tw ne, he was the youngest and,
without question, the mos ious of the Chairman's select
eam

Zaborski stepped out the pavement and walked
owards another door held or him He strode across the
narble floor and stopped hen he reached the lift gates
Several silent men and w ad also been waiting for the
ift but when it returned to ound floor and the Chairman
tepped in to the little cag of them made any attempt
o join him Zaborski tra lowly up towards his office,
never failing to compare it urably with the speed of the
one American elevator he h rienced They could launch
heir rockets before you cou o your office, his predecessor
ad warned him By the t borski had reached the top
loor and the gates had bee l back for him, he had made
p his mind It would be
A secretary helped him o

his hat Zaborski walked quickly to his desk The two files he had asked for were awaiting him He sat down and began to pore over Valchek's file When he had completed it, he barked out an order to his hovering secretary "Find Romanov"

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Romanov didn't notice the girl who handed him the phone "I'll be with him as soon as I have had a shower," was all she heard him say The girl who had taken the call had often wondered what Romanov looked like in the shower She, like all the other girls in the office, had seen him in the gymnasium a hundred times Six foot tall with that long, flowing blond hair – he resembled a Western film star And those eyes, 'piercing blue' the friend who shared her desk described them

"He's got a scar on his " the friend confided

"How do you know that?" she had asked, but her friend had only giggled in reply

The Chairman meanwhile had opened Romanov's personal file for a second time, and was still perus[illegible] details. He began to read the different entries t[illegible] a candid [illegible]ter assessment which Romanov [illegible] unless [illegible]ame Chairman.

[illegible]xander Petrovich Romanov, Born [illegible]
[illegible]7. Elected full Party member [illegible]
[illegible]her Peter Nicholevich Romanov, [illegible]
[illegible]nt in 1942. On returning to

The Chairman replaced the phone and his eyes returned to the file in front of him That Romanov could be found in the gymnasium at all hours came as no surprise the man's athletic prowess had been acknowledged far beyond the service

During his first year as a student, Romanov had continued diligently with his gymnastics and even gone on to represent the State side until the university coach had written in bold letters across one of his reports, "This student is too tall to be considered for serious Olympic competition" Romanov heeded the coach's advice and took up judo Within two years, he had been selected for the 1958 Eastern Bloc games in Budapest and within a further two years found other competitors preferred not to be drawn against him on his inevitable route to the final After his victory at the Soviet games in Moscow the Western press crudely described him as 'The Axe' Those who were already planning his long term future felt it prudent not to enter him for the Olympics

Once Romanov had completed his fifth year at the university and obtained his diploma (with distinction), he remained in Moscow and joined the diplomatic service

Zaborski had now reached the point in the file at which he had first come across the self-confident young man Each year the KGB were able to second from the diplomatic service any person they considered to be of exceptional talent Romanov was an obvious candidate Zaborski's rule, however, was not to enlist anyone who didn't consider the KGB to be the élite. Unwilling candidates never made good operatives and sometimes even ended up working for the other side Romanov showed no such doubt He had always wanted to be an officer of the KGB During the next six years he carried out tours at their embassies in Paris, London, Prague and Lagos By the time he had returned to Moscow to join the headquarters staff he was a sophisticated operative who was as relaxed at an ambassadorial cocktail party as he was in the gymnasium

Zaborski began to read some of the comments he himself had added to the report during the last four years – in particular how much Romanov had changed during his time on the Chairman's personal staff. As an operative, he had reached

e." Zaborski paused "So sensitive in fact that you will
ort only to me You can hand-select your own team and no
urces will be denied you "
I am honoured," said Romanov, sounding unusually sin-
:
You will be," replied the Chairman, "if you succeed in
overing the whereabouts of the Tsar's icon "
But I thought " began Romanov

CHAPTER FOUR

Adam walked over to the side of his bed and removed fro
bookshelf the Bible his mother had given him as a Confirm
[illegible] from the [illegible] -lope in [illegible]

Adam strolled through to the kitchen, fried himself a
and warmed up the other half of the previous day's
beans He placed the unwholesome meal on the kitchen
unable to put out of his mind the slap-up meal Lawrenc
Carolyn must now be enjoying at the new Italian restau
After Adam had finished and cleared his plate awa
returned to his room and lay on the bed thinking W
the contents of the faded envelope finally prove his fa
innocence? A plan began to form in his mind

When the grandfather clock in the hall chimed ten
Adam lifted his long legs over the end of the bed and p
the Bible back out of the bookshelf With some apprehe
Adam removed the envelope Next, he switched on the re
light by the side of the small writing desk, unfolded the

[illegible]

Goering's letter He left out only the greeting and wha
assumed to be a valediction – '*hochachtungsvoll*' – followe
[illegible] Reichsmarshal's large, bold [illegible]

opy carefully before replacing the original in its faded
ope He had just begun the same process with the official
nent, using a separate sheet of paper, when he heard a
urning, followed by voices at the front door Both
ence and Carolyn sounded as if they had drunk more
the promised bottle of wine, and Carolyn's voice in
cular had ascended into little more than a series of high-
ed giggles

lam sighed and switched off the light by the side of the
so they wouldn't know he was still awake In the darkness
ecame more sensitive to their every sound One of them
ed towards the kitchen, because he heard the fridge door
lch close and, a few seconds later, the sound of a cork
g extracted – he presumed from his last bottle of white
, as they were unlikely to be so drunk that they had started
he vinegar

eluctantly he rose from his chair, and circling his arms in
t of him, he made his way back to the bed He touched
corner of the bedstead and quietly lowered himself on to
mattress, then waited impatiently for Lawrence's bedroom
r to close.

le must have fallen asleep because the next thing he remem-
ed was the tick of the hall clock. Adam licked his fingers
l rubbed them over his eyes as he tried to get accustomed
he dark He checked the little luminous dial on his alarm
ck· ten past three He eased himself off the bed gingerly,
ling more than a little crumpled and weary Slowly he
oped his way back towards the desk, banging his knee on
corner of a chest of drawers during his travels He couldn't
p himself cursing He fumbled for the light switch, and
hen the bulb first glowed it made him blink several times
he faded envelope looked so insignificant – and perhaps it
as. The official document was still laid out on the centre of
e table alongside the first few lines of his handwritten
plicate.

Adam yawned as he began to study the words once more
he document was not as simple to copy out as the letter had
een, because this time the hand was spidery and cramped,

as if the writer had considered paper an expensive commodi
Adam left out the address on the top right hand corner a
reversed the eight digit number underlined at the head of t
text, otherwise what he ended up with was a faithful transcr
of the original

The work was painstaking, and took a surprisingly lo
time He wrote out each word in block capitals, and wh
he wasn't certain of the spelling he put down the possi
alternative letters below, he wanted to be sure of any tra
lation the first time

"My, you do work late," whispered a voice from beh
him.

Adam spun round, feeling like a burglar who had be
caught with his hands on the family silver

"You needn't look so nervous It's only me," said Carol
standing by the bedroom door

Adam stared up at the tall blonde who was even m
attractive clad only in Lawrence's large unbuttoned pyjam
and floppy slippers than she had been when he had seen h
fully dressed Her long, fair hair now dropped untidily o
her shoulders and he began to understand what Lawrence h
meant when he had once described her as someone who co
turn a match stick into a Cuban cigar

"The bathroom is at the end of the corridor," said Ada
a little feebly

"It wasn't the bathroom I was looking for, silly," she giggl
"I don't seem able to wake Lawrence After all that wine h
passed out like a defeated heavyweight boxer " She sigh

repl

'My God this is the sixties, Adam Share and share alike "
'It's just that . . ." began Adam
'What a waste," said Carolyn, "perhaps another time."
e tiptoed to the door, and slipped back out into the corridor,
aware of her German rival

that the work could continue night and day
The early information had come in almost by the hour and
e researchers had quickly been able to establish that the
tar's icon had remained in his private quarters at the Winter
alace at Petrograd until as late as December 1914 Romanov
udied religiously a photo of the small delicate painting of St
eorge and the Dragon St George in tiny mosaics patterns of
lue and gold while the dragon was in fiery red and yellow
lthough he had never shown any interest in art, Romanov
ould well understand why people could be moved by the little
nasterpiece. He continued to read details of the icon's history,
ut still couldn't work out why it was so important to the
tate. *He wondered if even Zaborski knew the reason*
A royal servant who had testified before the People's Court
year after the Revolution claimed that the Tsar's icon had
lisappeared for a few days in 1915 after the visit of Ludwig
Ernst, Grand Duke of Hesse At the time, the inquisitors had
taken scant interest in the misplaced icon because it was still
on the wall of the Tsar's study when they had stormed the
Winter Palace. What concerned the court more was why, in
the middle of a fierce war with the Kaiser's Germany, the
Grand Duke of Hesse should want to visit the Tsar at all
The Professor of History at the university had immediately
been asked for his opinion The great academic was puzzled
by the request, as the KGB had never shown any interest
in the nation's past history before Nevertheless, he briefed
Romanov *on everything that was known of the incident.*
Romanov pored over his report once again The Grand Duke,

it was thought, had been on a secret visit to his sister Alexan-
dra, the Tsarina Historians now believed that it had been his
intention to secure a cease-fire between Germany and Russia
in the hope that Germany could then concentrate her wa
efforts on the British and the French

There was no proof that the Tsar made any promises o
behalf of his people but the Grand Duke, it seemed, di
not return to Germany empty-handed As the reports of th
proceedings of the People's Court showed, another palac
servant had been instructed to wrap up the Tsar's icon an
pack it with the Grand Duke's belongings However, no o
on the palace staff could properly explain to the court how
few days later the icon reappeared in its rightful place on t
wall of the Tsar's private study

Romanov's chief researcher, Professor Oleg Konstantino
having studied the professor's notes and the other researche
contributions, had underlined his own conclusion in red in

"The Tsar must have replaced the original painting wit
brilliant copy having handed over the real icon for safe-keep
to his brother-in-law, the Grand Duke "

"But why," asked Romanov, "when the Tsar had a pal
full of Goyas, El Grecos, Titians and Rubens did he bother
smuggle out one icon and why does Brezhnev want it back
badly?"

Romanov instructed the professor and his twenty-four
searchers to turn their talents to the Royal House of Hess
the hope of tracing what had then happened to the Ts
icon Within ten days, they possessed between them m
information about the Grand Duke and his family than
professor at any university had managed to gather in a lifeti
As each file appeared on his desk Romanov laboured thro
the night, checking every scrap of information that might g
him a lead to the whereabouts of the original painting
came to a dead end when, after the Grand Duke's death,
painting had been left to his brother who was tragically ki
in a plane crash Nothing had been seen or heard of the
after that day

By the beginning of the third week, Romanov had reac

reluctant conclusion that there was nothing new on the ereabouts of the icon to be discovered He was preparing final report for the Chairman of the KGB when one earcher, Comrade Petrova, whose mind did not work in rallel lines, stumbled across an article in the London *Times* Wednesday, November 17, 1937 Petrova bypassed the earch leader and handed the relevant photocopy to manov personally, who, over the next few hours read the ws item so often that he came to know it off by heart

In keeping with the Thunderer's tradition, the foreign correondent remained anonymous The article carried the datene 'Ostend, November 16, 1937'

It read

> Grand Duke George of Hesse and four members of his family were tragically killed this morning when a Sabena aircraft carrying them from Darmstadt to London crashed in thick fog over the Belgian countryside
>
> The Grand Duke had been on his way to England to attend the wedding of his younger brother, Prince Louis, to the Hon Joanna Geddes The young prince had been waiting at Croydon Airport to greet his family when the news

The Times went on

> Prince Louis, who succeeds his brother as the Grand Duke of Hesse, will leave for Ostend with his bride later today in order that they can accompany the five coffins on their journey back to Germany The funerals will all take place in Darmstadt on November 23

It was the next paragraph that the researcher had circled boldly

to be one of the finest examples of early twentieth-century craftsmanship to come out of Russia since the Revolution "

Romanov looked up at the researcher "Twentieth-century copy be damned," he said "It was the fifteenth-century original and none of them realised it at the time – perhaps not even the old Grand Duke himself No doubt the Tsar had other plans for the icon had he managed to escape "

Romanov dreaded having to tell Zaborski that he could now prove conclusively that the original Tsar's icon had been destroyed in a plane crash some thirty years before Such news would not ensure promotion for its messenger, as he remained convinced that there was something far more important than the icon at stake for Zaborski to be so involved

He stared down at the photograph above the *Zeitung* report he young Grand Duke was shaking hands with the general in charge of the salvage team which had been successful in returning so many of the Prince's family possessions "But did he return them all?" Romanov said out loud

"What do you mean?" asked the young researcher Romanov waved his hand as he continued to stare at the pre-war, faded photograph of the two men Although the general was unnamed, every schoolboy in Germany would have recognised the large, impassive, heavy-jowled face with the chilling eyes which had become infamous to the Allied powers

Romanov looked up at the researcher "You can forget the Grand Duke from now on, Comrade Petrova Concentrate your efforts on Reichsmarshal Hermann Goering "

When Adam woke his first thoughts were of Carolyn His yawn turned into a grin as he considered her invitation of the night before Then he remembered He jumped out of bed and walked over to his desk everything was in place exactly as he had left it. He yawned for a second time

It was ten to seven Although he felt as fit as he had been the day he left the army some seven weeks before, he still completed a punishing routine of exercise every morning He intended to be at his peak when the Foreign Office put

Some of the late Grand Duke's personal belongings, includ ing several wedding presents for *Prince Louis* and his bride, *were scattered for miles in* the vicinity of the crashed aircraft. The German Government announced this morning that a senior German general has been appointed to lead a team of salvage experts to ensure the recovery of *any* family possessions that still belong to the *Grand* Duke's successor

Romanov immediately called for the young researcher [illegible] later she gave no [illegible] *department* She [illegible] pression on him [illegible] she had put on with the clothes she could afford [illegible] the prettiest outfit she possessed and cut her hair in the style of an American actress called Mia Farrow whom she had seen in one of the few films not banned by the authorities She hoped Romanov would notice

"I want you to scour *The Times* every day from November 17, 1937 for six months, and also check the German and Belgian press during the same period in case you come across anything that would show what the salvage experts had dis covered " He dismissed her with a smile

Within twenty-four hours Comrade Petrova barged back into *Romanov's office* without even bothering to knock Romanov merely raised his eyebrows at the discourtesy befor devouring an article she had discovered in the Berlin *Autsho* of Saturday, January 19, 1938

"*The investigation into the crash* last November of th Sabena aircraft that was carrying the Hesse royal family London has now been concluded All personal possessio belonging to the family that were discovered in the vicinity the wreckage have been returned to the Grand *Duke*, Prin Louis, who, it is understood, was particularly saddened by t loss of a family heirloom that was to have been a wedding f from his brother, *the late Grand Duke* The gift, a paint known as the 'Tsar's Icon', had once belonged to his unc Tsar Nicholas II The icon of St George and the Drag although only a copy of Rublev's masterpiece, was consider

ırd on a bowl of cornflakes, while running a finger down the ›reign Exchange rates in the *Financial Times*

Adam checked his watch already ten past eight "Won't ›u be late for the office?" he asked

"Dear boy," said Lawrence, "I am not a lackey who works : the kind of bank where the customers keep shop hours "

Adam laughed "But I will, however, have to be shackled › my desk in the City by nine thirty," Lawrence admitted They don't send a driver for me nowadays, ' he explained In this traffic, I told them, it's so much quicker by tube "

Adam started to make himself breakfast

"I could give you a lift on my motorbike "

"Can you imagine a man in my position arriving at the ıeadquarters of Barclays Bank on a motorbike? The Chairman vould have a fit," he added, as he folded the *Financial Times*

Adam cracked a second egg into the frying pan

"See you tonight then, glorious, unwashed and un-ɛmployed," jeered Lawrence as he collected his rolled umbrella from the hat stand

Adam cleared away and washed up, happy to act as house-wife while he was still unemployed Despite years of being taken care of by a batman he knew exactly what was expected of him All he had planned before his interview with the Foreign Office that afternoon was a long bath and a slow shave. Then he remembered that Reichsmarshal Goering was still resting on the table in the bedroom

"Have you come up with anything that would indicate Goering might have kept the icon for himself?" asked Romanov, turning hopefully to the researcher

"*Only the obvious,*" Anna Petrova *replied* in an offhanc manner

Romanov considered reprimanding the young girl for suel insolence, but said nothing on this occasion After all, Comrad Petrova had proved to be far the most innovative of his tean of researchers

"And what was so obvious?" enquired Romanov

"It's common knowledge that Hitler put Goering in charg

'but unfortunately Goering wasn't quite as naïve as the newspaper cartoonists of the time made him out to be I think he deposited the paintings and antiques in several Swiss banks and to date no one has ever been able to discover which banks or the aliases he used "

"Then *we* shall have to do so," said Romanov "Where do you suggest we start?"

"Well, since the end of the war many of the paintings have [illegible] including [illegible] through Goering's hands although the curator of the museum has never been willing to explain how the gallery came into possession of it."

"Have all the missing pictures now been found?" asked Romanov anxiously

"Over seventy per cent, but there are still many more to be accounted for Some may even have been lost or destroyed, [illegible] they can be certain of a nation's or individual's right of possession. In the case of the Grand Duke of Hesse and the [illegible]

[illegible] that differs from establishment to establishment," said Petrova. "Some banks wait for twenty years or more and then try either by extensive research or advertising to contact the

of all the art treasures captured on behalf of the Third Reich. But as the Führer had such fixed personal opinions as to what constituted quality, many of the world's masterpieces were judged as 'depraved' and therefore unworthy to be put in public view for the delectation of the master race."

"So what happened to them?"

"Hitler ordered them to be destroyed. Among those who condemned to death by burning were such masters as Van Gogh, Manet, Monet – and especially the young Picasso. He was considered unworthy of the blue-blooded Aryan race Hitler was grooming to rule the world."

"You are not suggesting Goering could have stolen the Tsar's icon," asked Romanov staring up at the ceiling, "only then to burn it?"

"No, no. Goering was not that stupid. As we now know, he didn't always obey the Führer's every word."

"Goering failed to carry out Hitler's orders?" said Romanov in disbelief.

"Depends from which standpoint you view it," Petrova replied. "Was he to behave as his lunatic master demanded or turn a blind eye and use his common sense?"

"Stick to the facts," said Romanov, his voice suddenly sharp.

"Yes, Comrade Major," said the young researcher in a tone that suggested she believed herself to be indispensable, at least

[illegible] not [illegible] some [illegible] own [illegible] in a few hundred marks on the open market in the first place. But the masterpieces, the real works of genius, were moved discreetly over the border and deposited in the vaults of Swiss banks."

"So there's still an outside chance that having found the icon [illegible]"

"He then had it placed in a Swiss bank," added Petrova. "I wish it were that simple, Comrade Major," said the researcher,

"Why?" sighed Petrova, a little peeved that her deductions
: now proving wide of the mark
Because for the past three weeks I have had heaven knows
many operatives combing Europe for the Tsar's icon.
y have spoken to nearly every major curator, keeper, dealer

original still hangs in the Winter Palace, it has, for the
t twenty years, been lodged in a Swiss bank waiting for
eone to claim it."
'A long shot," said the researcher
"I am quite aware of that," said Romanov sharply, "but
n't forget that many Swiss banks have a twenty-five-year
e before disclosure, some even thirty One or two even have
deadline at all as long as enough money has been deposited
cover the housing of the treasure."
"Heaven knows how many banks there might be who fall
o that category," sighed Petrova.
"Heaven knows," agreed Romanov, "and so might you by
ne o'clock tomorrow morning And then it will be necessary
r me to pay a visit to the one man in this country who knows
erything about banking "
"Am I expected to start straight away, Comrade Major?"
e researcher asked coyly
Romanov smiled and looked down into the girl's green eyes.
ressed in the dull grey uniform of her trade, no one would
ave given her a second look But in the nude she was quite
agnificent He leaned over until their lips nearly met.
"You'll have to rise very early Anna, but for now just turn
ut the light."

owner or their next of kin In the case of the Jews who lost their lives under the Nazi regime, it has often proved impossible to trace a legitimate owner Although I have been unable to prove it, I suspect they kept the rewards and split the proceeds among themselves," said Petrova "Typical capitalists "

"That is neither fair nor accurate, Comrade," said Romanov, glad to show that he had also been doing some research "Because that is another of the great myths perpetrated by the poor In fact when the banks have been unable to discover the rightful owner of any treasure left with them they have handed it over to the Swiss Red Cross to auction "

"But if the Tsar s icon had ever been auctioned we would have heard about it by now through one of our agents"

"Precisely," said Romanov "And I've already checked through the inventory of the Red Cross four icons have been disposed of during the last twenty years and none of them was St George and the Dragon "

"Then that can only mean some unscrupulous bankers have disposed of the icon privately once they felt sure no one was going to make a claim "

"Another false premise I suspect Comrade Petrova

"How can you be so certain?" the young researcher asked

"For one simple reason, Comrade The Swiss banking families all know each other intimately and have never in the

[illegible]

about [illegible]

The truth is that Swiss bankers make so much money dealing with honest people that it has never been in their best interests to become involved with crooks There are remarkably few exceptions to this rule, which is the reason so many people are willing to do business with the Swiss

"So if Goering stole the Tsar's icon and deposited it in a Swiss bank vault it could be anywhere in the world by now" said Petrova

I doubt it "

"Why?" sighed Petrova, a little peeved that her deductions were now proving wide of the mark

"Because for the past three weeks I have had heaven knows how many operatives combing Europe for the Tsar's icon They have spoken to nearly every major curator, keeper, dealer and crook in the art world and yet they still haven't come up with a single lead And why not? Because the only people who have seen the icon since 1917 were the Hesses and Goering, which leaves me with only one hope if it was not destroyed when the Grand Duke's plane crashed," said Romanov

"Namely?" asked Petrova.

"That while the rest of the world is under the illusion that the original still hangs in the Winter Palace, it has, for the past twenty years, been lodged in a Swiss bank waiting for someone to claim it "

"A long shot," said the researcher

"I am quite aware of that," said Romanov sharply, "but don't forget that many Swiss banks have a twenty-five-year rule before disclosure, some even thirty One or two even have no deadline at all as long as enough money has been deposited to cover the housing of the treasure "

"Heaven knows how many banks there might be who fall into that category," sighed Petrova

"Heaven knows," agreed Romanov, "and so might you by nine o'clock tomorrow morning. And then it will be necessary for me to pay a visit to the one man in this country who knows everything about banking "

"Am I expected to start straight away, Comrade Major?" the researcher asked coyly.

Romanov smiled and looked down into the girl's green eyes. Dressed in the dull grey uniform of her trade, no one would have given her a second look But in the nude she was quite magnificent He leaned over until their lips nearly met

"You'll have to rise very early Anna, but for now just turn out the light "

CHAPTER FIVE

It took Adam only a few more minutes before he had checked over both documents again He put the original back in the aded envelope and replaced it in the Bible on his bookshel Finally he folded his duplicated copy of Goering's letter into three horizontal pieces and cut it carefully along the folds into trips which he placed in a clean envelope and left on his edside table Adam's next problem was how to obtain a ranslation of the document and Goering's letter without arous ng unnecessary curiosity Years of army training had taught im to be cautious when faced with an unknown situation He uickly dismissed the German Embassy, the German Tourist oard and the German Press Agency as all three were too fficial, and therefore likely to ask unwanted questions Once e was dressed he went to the hall and began to flick through ie pages in the London E–K Directory until his finger reached ie column he had been searching for

German Broadcasting
German Cultural Institute
German Federal Railway
German Hospital
German Old People's Home

is eye passed over 'German Technical Translations' a opped at a more promising entry The address was given ayswater House, 35 Craven Terrace, W2 He checked t

He strolled down Edith Grove and into the King's Road, enjoying the morning sun The street had been transformed from the one he had known as a young subaltern Boutiques had taken the place of antiquarian bookshops Record shops had replaced the local cobbler, and Dolcis had given way to Mary Quant Take a fortnight's holiday, and you couldn't be sure anything would still be there when you returned, he reflected ruefully

the ears of everyone within shouting distance

By the time Adam reached Sloane Square the world had almost returned to normal – Peter Jones, W H Smith's and the London Underground The words his mother sung so often over the kitchen sink came back to him every time he walked into the square

> And you're giving a treat (penny ice and cold meat)
> To a party of friends and relations,
> They're a ravenous horde, and they all came aboard
> At Sloane Square and South Kensington stations

He paid a shilling for a ticket to Paddington and, installed in a half-empty carriage, once again went over his plan When he emerged into the open air at Paddington he checked the street name and, once he was sure of his bearings, walked out on to Craven Road until he came to the first available newsagent and then asked the directions for Craven Terrace

"Fourth road on the left, mate," said the shopkeeper, not bothering to look up from a pile of *Radio Times* on which he was pencilling names Adam thanked him and a few minutes later found himself standing at the end of a short drive, looking up at the bold green and yellow sign The German Young Men's Christian Association

He opened the gate, walked up the drive and strode confi-

dently through the front door. He was stopped by a porte standing in the hallway

"Can I help you, guv'nor?"

Adam put on an exaggerated military accent and explained that he was looking for a young man called Hans Kramer

"Never 'eard of 'im, sir," said the porter, almost standing to attention when he recognised the regimental tie He turned to a book that lay open on the desk "'E isn't registered," he added, a Woodbine-stained thumb running down the list of names in front of him "Why don't you try the lounge or the games room?" he suggested, gesturing with the thumb to a door on the right

"Thank you," said Adam, not dropping the plummy tones He walked smartly across the hall and through the swing doors – which judging from the lack of paint on the base looked as if they had been kicked open more often than they had been pushed He glanced around the room Several students were lounging about reading German papers and magazines He wasn't sure where to start, until he spotted a studious-looking girl on her own in a corner, poring over a copy of *Time* magazine Brezhnev's face stared out from the cover Adam strolled over and took the empty seat beside her She glanced sideways at him and couldn't hide her surprise at his formal dress He waited for her to put the paper down before asking, "I wonder if you could assist me?"

"How?" enquired the girl, sounding a little apprehensive

"I just need something translated "

She looked relieved "I will see if I can help Have you brought something with you?" "Yes I have, I hope it isn't too difficult," he said Adam took the envelope from his inside pocket and extracted the first paragraph of Goering's letter

Then he put the envelope back in his pocket, took out a little notebook and waited expectantly He felt like a cub reporter.

She read the paragraph over two or three times, then seemed to hesitate

"Is anything w

"Not exactly,"

ront of her "It's just that it's a little bit old-fashioned so
I might not be able to give you the exact sense "
dam breathed a sigh of relief.
he repeated each sentence slowly, first in German and then
English as if wanting to feel the meaning as well as just
nslating the words
'Over the last past year we have come to know .
h other somewhat no, no," she said, "quite well "
am wrote each word down as the girl translated them
'You have never disguised – perhaps a better meaning is
dden' –" she added, "your distaste for the National Socialist
rty "
She raised her head and stared at Adam "It's only out
a book," he assured her She didn't look convinced but
vertheless continued "But you have at every time no,
all times, behaved with the courtesy of an officer and a
ntleman "
The girl looked up, even more puzzled, as she had now
ached the last word
"Is that all?" she asked "It doesn't make sense There has
be more "
"No, that's it, said Adam, quickly taking back the sheet of
aper "Thank you," he added "It was most kind of you to
elp."
He left the girl and was relieved to see her shrug resignedly
nd return to her copy of *Time* Adam went in search of the
ames room
When he swung the door open he found a young man in a
World Cup T-shirt and brown suede shorts He was tapping
table tennis ball up and down listlessly
"Care for a game?" said the boy, not looking at all
hopeful.
"Sure," said Adam, removing his jacket and picking up the
table tennis bat at his end of the table For twenty minutes
Adam had to play flat out to make sure he lost 18–21, 21–
12, 17–21 As he replaced his jacket and congratulated his
opponent he felt sure he had gained the young man's con-
fidence.

dently through the front door. He was stopped by a porter standing in the hallway

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Then he put the envelope back in his pocket, took out a little notebook and waited expectantly He felt like a cub reporter

She read the paragraph over two or three times, then seemed to hesitate.

"Is anything wrong?"

"Not exactly," she replied, still concentrating on the words

ont of her. "It's just that it's a little bit old-fashioned so I might not be able to give you the exact sense "

dam breathed a sigh of relief

ne repeated each sentence slowly, first in German and then English as if wanting to feel the meaning as well as just slating the words

Over the last past year we have come to know . .

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The girl looked up, even more puzzled, as she had now ached the last word

"Is that all?" she asked "It doesn't make sense There has be more."

"No, Adam, quickly taking back the sheet of "It was most kind of you to

resignedly

of the

man in a

not looking at all

jacket and

table.

"You put up good fight," said the German "Give me good game"

Adam joined him at his end of the table "I wonder if you could help me with something?" he said

"Your backhand?" said the young man.

"No, thank you," said Adam, "I just need a paragraph of German translated" He handed over the middle paragraph of the letter Once again, the would-be translator looked puzzled

"It's from a book, so it may seem a little out of context," Adam said, unconvincingly

"Okay, I try" As the boy began to study the paragraph, the girl who had already translated the first section came into the games room She made her way towards them

"This hard to make out, I am not good translation for," the young man said "My girlfriend better, I think. I ask her. *Liebling, kannst Du dies für den Herrn ins Englische?*" Without looking at Adam he passed the second paragr over to the girl who immediately said, "I knew there more"

"No, no, don't bother," said Adam, and grabbed the p of paper away from the girl He turned back to the boy said, "Thank you for the game Sorry to have bothered yo and walked hurriedly out into the corridor, heading for front door.

"Did you find 'im, sir?"

"Find *him*?" said Adam

"Hans Kramer," said the porter

"Oh, yes, thank you," said Adam As he turned to leave saw the young boy and his girlfriend were following cl behind.

Adam ran down the drive and hailed a passing taxi.

"Where to?" said the cabbie

"[illegible] Lancaster Hotel

his table-tennis opponent in conversation with the porter
girl stood alongside them, pointing to the taxi
am only relaxed when the cab turned the corner and they
out of sight
less than a minute the taxi had drawn up outside the
l Lancaster Adam handed the cabbie half a crown and
ed for the change Then he pushed through the revolving
s of the hotel and hung around in the foyer for a few
ents before returning to the pavement again He checked
watch: twelve thirty. Easily enough time for lunch, he
ght, before going on to his interview with the Foreign
ce He headed across the Bayswater Road into the park at
isk pace, knowing he couldn't hope to find a pub until he
hed Knightsbridge
dam recalled the table tennis match Damn, he thought
ould have thrashed him At least that would have given
something else to think about.

nanov's eye ran down the list of the fourteen banks There
still an outside chance that one of them might be in
session of the Tsar's icon, but the names meant nothing to
. It was another world, and he knew he would now have
eek advice from an expert.
He unlocked the top drawer of his desk and
red book held
Many names had been scratched out or over-
itten as regimes came and went but Aleksei Andreovich
skonov had remained in his present position as Chair-
an of the National Bank for nearly a decade, and only
romyko the Foreign Secretary had served in any office
Romanov dialled a number on his private line and
to be put through to the Chairman of Gosbank It
voice came on the

do for you?"
d Romanov
came from the other end
Romanov could

The Chairman of the KGB shook his head firmly
Bugs don't have eyes, thought Romanov, but you know hat that something is, don't you?
The Chairman rose from his desk and walked over to the all and tore another page from the calendar "Only ten days ft to find the damn thing," he said "The General Secretary as taken to phoning me at one o'clock every morning"
"One o'clock in the morning?" said Romanov joining in the ame.
"Yes, the poor man can't sleep, they tell me," said the Chairman, returning to his desk. "It comes to all of us in time - perhaps even you, Romanov, and maybe earlier than you xpect if you don't stop asking questions" He gave his young colleague a wry smile.
Romanov left the Chairman a few minutes later and returned to his office to go over the questions that did need to be answered by the Chairman of Gosbank He couldn't help becoming distracted by thoughts of what could possibly be the significance of such a small painting, but accepted that he must concentrate his efforts on finding it and then perhaps the secret it contained would become obvious

Romanov reached the steps of Neglinnaya 12 at three thirty because he knew he needed more than the fifteen minutes he had been allocated if he was to get all his questions answered He only hoped Poskonov would agree to see him immediately
After announcing himself at the reception desk he was accompanied by a uniformed guard up the wide marble staircase to the first floor, where Poskonov's secretary was waiting to greet him. Romanov was led to an anteroom "I will inform the Chairman of the bank that you have arrived, Comrade Romanov," the secretary said, and then disappeared back into his own office Romanov paced up and down the small anteroom impatiently, but the secretary did not return until the hands on the clock were in a straight line At three fifty, Romanov was ushered into the Chairman's room
The young major was momentarily taken aback by the sheer opulence of the room. The long red velvet curtains, the marble

officer from the KGB would be making such an exorbitant nand."

Romanov stepped forward, picked up the phone by Posnov's side and held it out to him "Why don't you ask onid Ilyich yourself and save us all a lot of time?" He pushed e phone defiantly towards the banker Poskonov stared back him, took the phone and placed it to his ear. Romanov nsed the sort of tension he only felt in the field

A voice came on the line "You called, Comrade Chairman?"

"Yes," replied the old man "Cancel my four o'clock apintment, and see that I am not disturbed until Major omanov leaves "

"Yes, Comrade Chairman "

Poskonov replaced the phone and, without another word, se from behind his desk and walked around to Romanov's de. He ushered the young man into a comfortable chair on ie far side of the room below a bay window and took the seat pposite him

"I knew your grandfather," he said in a calm, matter-of-fact one. "I was a junior commodity clerk when I first met him had just left school and he was very kind to me but he was ust as impatient as you are Which was why he was the best ur trader in Russia and thought to be the worst poker player "

Romanov laughed He had never known his grandfather ind the few books that referred to him had long ago been destroyed His father talked openly of his wealth and position which had only given the authorities ammunition finally to destroy him

"You'll forgive my curiosity, Major, but if I am to hand over one hundred million dollars in gold I should like to know what it is to be spent on I thought only the CIA put in chits for those sort of expenses without explanation "

Romanov laughed again and explained to the Chairman how they had discovered the Tsar's icon was a fake and he had been set the task of recovering the original When he had completed his story he handed over the names of the fourteen banks The banker studied the list closely while Romanov outlined the course of action he proposed to take, showing how

the money would be returned intact as soon as he had located the missing icon

"But how can one small icon possibly be that important to the State?" Poskonov asked out loud, almost as if Romanov were no longer in the room

"I have no idea," replied Romanov truthfully and then briefed him on the results of his research

There was an exasperated grunt from the other chair when Romanov had finished "May I be permitted to suggest an alternative to your plan?"

"Please do," said Romanov, relieved to be gaining the old man's co-operation

"Do you smoke?" asked the banker, taking a packet of Dunhill cigarettes from his coat pocket

"No," said Romanov, his eyebrows lifting slightly at the sight of the red box

The old man paused as he lit a cigarette "That suit was not tailored in Moscow either, Major," the banker said, pointing at Romanov with his cigarette "Now, to business – and do not hesitate to correct me if I have misunderstood any of your requirements You suspect that lodged in one of these fourteen Swiss banks" – the Chairman tapped the list with his index finger – "is the original Tsar's icon You therefore want me to deposit large amounts of gold with each bank in the hope that it will give you immediate access to the head of the family, or chairman You will then offer the chairman the chance to control the entire hundred million if they promise to co-operate with you?"

"Yes," said Romanov "Bribery is surely something the West has always understood"

"I would have said 'naïve' if I hadn't known your grandfather, though to be fair it was he who ended up making millions of roubles, not me Nevertheless, how much do you imagine is a lot of money to a major Swiss bank?"

Romanov considered the question "Ten million, twenty million?"

"To the Moscow Narodny Bank perhaps," said Poskonov "But every one of the banks you hope to deal with will have

al customers with deposits of over a hundred million
"

omanov was unable to hide his disbelief
confess," continued the chairman, "that our revered
eral Secretary showed no less incredulity when I informed
of these facts some years ago "
Then I will need a thousand million?" asked Romanov
No, no, no We must approach the problem from a different
dpoint You do not catch a poacher by offering him rabbit
"
But if the Swiss are not moved by the offer of vast amounts
oney, what *will* move them?"
The simple suggestion that their bank has been used for
inal activity," said the chairman
But how " began Romanov
Let me explain. You say that the Tsar's icon hanging in
Winter Palace is not the original but a copy A good copy,
nted by a twentieth-century court painter, but nevertheless
opy. Therefore why not explain to each of the fourteen
nks privately that, after extensive research, we have reason
believe that one of the nation's most valuable treasures has
en substituted with a copy and the original is thought to
ve been deposited in their bank? And rather than cause
diplomatic incident – the one thing every Swiss banker
shes to avoid at any cost – perhaps they would, in the
terests of good relationships, consider checking in their
ults items that have not been claimed for over twenty
ars."
Romanov looked straight at the old man, realising why he
d survived several purges "I owe you an apology, Comrade
oskonov "
"No, no, we each have our own little skills I am sure I
ould be as lost in your world as you appear to be in mine
ow, if you will allow me to contact each of the chairmen on
is list and tell them no more than the truth – a commodity
am always obliged to trade in although I imagine your
ounterparts are not so familiar with – namely that I suspect
he Tsar's icon is in *their* bank, most of them will be disinclined

to hold on to the masterpiece if they believe in so doing a cr
has been perpetrated against a sovereign state "

"I cannot overstress the urgency," said Romanov

"Just like your grandfather," Poskonov repeated "So be
If they can be tracked down, I shall speak to every one of the
oday At least that's one of the advantages of the rest of th
world waking up after us Be assured I shall be in touch wi
you the moment I have any news "

"Thank you," said Romanov, rising to leave. "You hav
een most helpful " He was about to add, as he normally do
n such circumstances, I shall so inform my Chairman, but h
hecked himself, realising the old man wouldn't have given
amn

The chairman of Gosbank closed the door behind him an
alked over to the bay window and watched Romanov ru
own the steps of the bank to a waiting car I couldn't hav
upplied you with the one hundred million in gold bullion a
is particular time, even if the General Secretary had ordered
e to, he thought to himself I doubt if I have ten million
llars worth of gold left in the vaults at this moment. Th
eneral Secretary has already ordered me to fly every availabl
nce to the Bank of New York – so cleverly was his plo

airman watched Romanov's car drive away Of course if
e your grandfather, you read the *Washington Post* as well as
oda, you would already have known this He returned to
desk and checked the names of the fourteen banks.
He knew instantly which of the fourteen had to be phoned

am stepped out of Tattersalls Tavern on the corner of
ightsbridge Green and headed past the Hyde Park Hotel
ards the Royal Thames Yacht Club It seemed a strange
ce for the Foreign Office to hold an interview, but so far
ything connected with the application had been somewhat
tenous
le arrived a few minutes early and asked the ex-Royal

nes sergeant on the door where the interviews were taking
e.
Sixth floor, sir. Take the lift in the corner," he pointed
d of him, "and announce yourself at reception "
dam pressed a button and waited for the lift The doors
ned immediately and he stepped in A rather overweight,
ectacled man of roughly his own age who looked as if he
er turned down the third course of any meal followed him
more leisurely pace Adam touched the sixth button, but
her man spoke on their journey up to the sixth floor The
e man stepped out of the lift in front of Adam
Wainwright's the name," he informed the girl on the
ption desk.
Yes, sir," said the girl, "you're a little early, but do have
at over there " She gestured towards a chair in the corner,
n her eyes moved on to Adam and she smiled
Scott," he informed her
Yes, sir," she repeated "Could you join the other gentle-
n? They will be seeing you next " Adam went over and

u by any chance speak German?" Adam asked suddenly,
ming to face the other interviewee
"German, French, Italian and Spanish," Wainwright re-
ied, looking up "I assumed that was how I managed to get
is far," he added somewhat smugly
"Then perhaps you could translate a paragraph from a
rman letter for me?"
"Delighted, old fellow," said Adam's companion, who pro-
eded to remove the pair of thick-lensed glasses from his nose,
d waited for Adam to extract the middle paragraph of the
tter from his envelope
"Now, let me see," Wainwright said, taking the little slip of
aper and replacing the glasses "Quite a challenge I say,
d fellow, you're not part of the interviewing team by any
hance?"

"No, no," said Adam, smiling "I'm in exactly the sa
position as you – except I don't speak German, French, Italia
or Spanish "

Wainwright seemed to relax "Now let me see," he repeated
as Adam took out the small notebook from his inside pocket

"During the past year you cannot have failed to . notice
that I have been receiving from one of the guards a regular,
regular regular supply'," he said suddenly, "yes, 'supply
of Havana cigars One of the few pleasures I have been
allocated' – no, 'allowed', better still 'permitted' – 'despite my
incarceration' That's the nearest I can get," Wainwright
added "'The cigars themselves have also served another
purpose'," Wainwright continued, obviously enjoying himself,
"'as they contained tiny capsules '"

"Mr Scott "

"Yes," said Adam, jumping up obediently

"The Board will see you now," said the receptionist

"Do you want me to finish it off while they're finishing you
off, old chap?" said Wainwright

"Thank you," Adam replied, "if it's not too much trouble "

"Far easier than the crossword," Wainwright added, leaving
n one side the little unfilled half-matrix of squares

lex Romanov was not a patient man at the best of times, and
th the General Secretary now ringing up his chief twice r
y, these were not the best of times

While he waited for results of the chairman of Gosbank's
uiries he re-read the research papers that had been left on
desk, and checked any new intelligence that had been sent
by his agents in the field Romanov resented the scraps
formation the chairman of Gosbank must have been
ing by the hour but he made no attempt to pester th
an despite his time problem

en the chairman of the bank called

this occasion Romanov was driven straight over to the
Bank at Neglinnaya 12 and ushered up to the finely
ed room without a moment's delay Pinkovov, dressed

another of those suits with an even larger check, was anding to greet him at the door

"You must have wondered if I had forgotten you," were oskonov's opening words as he ushered Romanov to the omfortable chair. "But I wanted to have some positive news give you rather than waste your time You don't smoke, if emember correctly," he added, taking out his packet of nhill cigarettes

"No, thank you," Romanov said, wondering if the chairn's doctor realised how much the old man smoked

The chairman's secretary entered the room and placed two pty glasses, a frosted flask and a plate of caviar in front of them Romanov waited in silence

"I have, over the past two days, managed to talk to the airmen of twelve of the banks on your original list," Posnov began, as he poured two vodkas, "but I have avoided aking contact with the remaining two "

"Avoided?" repeated Romanov

"Patience, Comrade," said Poskonov, sounding like a benevent uncle. "You have longer to live than I so if there is any ne to be wasted it must be yours "

Romanov lowered his eyes.

"I avoided one of the chairmen," Poskonov continued, because he is in Mexico showing President Ordaz how not repay their loan to Chase Manhattan while at the same me borrowing even more dollars from the Bank of America he pulls that off, I shall have to recommend to the General ecretary of the Party that he is offered my job when I retire he second gentleman I have avoided because he is officially Chicago, closing a major Eurobond deal with Continental linois, while in fact he is booked in at the St Francis Hotel San Francisco with his mistress I feel certain you would ree, Comrade Major, that it would not advance our cause disturb either of these gentlemen at this precise moment he first has enough problems to be going on with for the rest the week, while the second may well have his phone tapped and we wouldn't want the Americans to discover what we e searching for, would we?"

"Agreed, Comrade," said Romanov.

"Good. Anyway as they both return to Switzerland at next week we have quite enough to be going on with for now."

"Yes, but what –" Romanov began.

"It will please you to know," continued Poskonov, "that the twelve remaining chairmen all have agreed to co-operate with us and five have already phoned back. Four to say they have run a thorough check on the possessions of customers who have been out of contact with the bank for over twenty years, but have come up with nothing that remotely resembles an icon. In fact, one of them opened a deposit box in the presence of three other directors that had not been touched since 1931 only to discover it contained nothing but a cork from a 1929 bottle of Taylor's port."

"Only a cork?" said Romanov.

"Well, 1929 was a vintage year," admitted the chairman.

"And the fifth?" enquired Romanov.

"Now that, I suspect, may be our first breakthrough," continued Poskonov, referring to the file in front of him. He adjusted his spectacles with the forefinger of his right hand before continuing. "Herr Dieter Bischoff of Bischoff et Cie", he looked up at his guest, as if Romanov might have recognized the name – "an honourable man with whom I have dealt many times in the past – honourable, that is, by Western standards of course, Comrade," added the chairman, obviously enjoying himself. "Bischoff has come up with something that was left [illegible] – but he [illegible] today," he added. The chairman waved him back into his chair.

"The plane you require does not leave Sheremtyevo airport until four thirty-five. In any case, I have already booked two seats on it for you."

"Two?" enquired Romanov.

"You will obviously need an expert to accompany you. [illegible] know considerably more about icons than you do

nt banking," Poskonov added. "I also took the liberty of
king you on the Swissair flight. One should never fly
oflot if it can be avoided. It has managed only one aviation

ouitment for you to see Herr Bischoff at ten o'clock
norrow morning – unless, of course, you have something
re pressing to keep you in Moscow, Comrade?"
Romanov smiled
"I note from your file that you have never served in Switzer-
d," said the old man, showing off "So may I also recom-
end that you stay at the St Gothard while you are in Zurich
cques Pontin will take excellent care of you Nationality has
ver been a problem for the Swiss, only currency And so
at brings my little investigation up to date, and I shall be in
uch again as soon as the two itinerant chairmen return to
vitzerland next Monday. All I can do for the moment how-
er, is wish you luck in Zurich "
"Thank you," said Romanov "May I be permitted to add
ow much I appreciate your thoroughness "
"My pleasure, Comrade, let's just say that I still owe your
randfather a favour, and perhaps one day you will find you
we me one, and leave it at that."
Romanov tried to fathom the meaning of the old man's
ords. There was no clue to be found in Poskonov's expression
nd so he left without another word But as Romanov walked
own the wide marble staircase, he considered the banker's
entiment again and again because throw-away lines were
ever delivered to an officer of the KGB

y the time Romanov had returned to Dzerzhinsky Square,
is secretary informed him that Herr Bischoff's assistant had

efore walking up two floors to see the Chairman and brief

HAPTER SIX

hank you very much," said Adam, trying to look casual lipping it into his inside pocket without looking at the lts

What was it like, old chap?" his companion asked cau-sly.

No trouble for a man who has German, French, Spanish Italian as part of his armoury," Adam assured him "Best ick, anyway "

Mr Wainwright," said the secretary, "the Board will see now "

dam took the lift to the ground floor and decided to walk ne, stopping on the corner of Wilton Place to buy a bag of les from a barrow boy who seemed to spend most of his e on the lookout for the police Adam moved on, going over his mind the Board's questions and his answers – a pointless rcise he decided, although he still felt confident the inter-w had gone well He came to such a sudden halt that the destrian behind only just stopped himself bumping into lam. What had attracted his attention was a sign which ad. 'The German Food Centre'. An attractive girl with a eerful smile and laughing eyes was sitting at the cash register

by the doorway. Adam strode into the shop and went straight over to her without attempting to purchase a single item.

"You have not bought anything?" she enquired with a slight accent.

"No, I'm just about to," Adam assured her, "but I wondered, do you speak German?"

"Most girls from Mainz do," she replied, grinning.

"Yes, I suppose they would," said Adam, looking at the girl more carefully. She must have been in her early twenties, Adam decided, and he was immediately attracted by her friendly smile and manner. Her shiny, dark hair was done up in a pony tail with a big red bow. Her white sweater and neat pleated skirt would have made any man take a second look. Her slim legs were tucked under the chair. "I wonder if you would be kind enough to translate a short paragraph for me?"

"I try," she said, still smiling.

Adam took the envelope containing the final section of the letter out of his pocket and handed it over to her.

"The style is a bit old fashioned," she said, looking serious. "It may take a little time."

"I'll go and do some shopping," he told her, and started walking slowly round the long stacked shelves. He selected a little salami, frankfurters, bacon, and some German mustard, looking up now and then to see how the girl was progressing. From what he could make out, she was only able to translate a few words at a time, as she was continually interrupted by [illegible]

counter.

"One pound two shillings and sixpence," she said. Adam handed over two pounds and she returned his change and the little piece of paper.

"This I consider a rough translation, but I think the meaning

"You could invite me to share with you your frankfurters," e laughed

"What a nice idea," said Adam "Why don't you join me dinner tonight?"

"I was not serious," she said

"I was," smiled Adam. Another person joined the queue d the old lady immediately behind him began to look restive Adam grabbed a leaflet from the counter, retreated towards e back of the store, and began to scribble down his name, ddress and phone number He waited for the two customers front of him to pay, then handed over to her a 'once in a fetime' Persil offer.

"What's this?" the girl asked innocently.

"I've put my name and address on the centre page," Adam aid "I will expect you for dinner at about eight this evening. t least you know what's on the menu."

She looked uncertain. "I really was only joking"

"I won't eat you," said Adam "Only the sausages."

She looked at the leaflet in her hand and laughed. "I'll think bout it."

Adam strolled out on to the road whistling A bad morning, good afternoon and – perhaps – an even better evening

He was back at the flat in time to watch the five forty-five news Mrs Gandhi, the *new Prime Minister of India*, was facing open revolt in her cabinet and Adam wondered if Britain could ever have a woman Prime Minister England were 117 for seven in their first innings, with the West Indies still well on top He groaned and turned off the television Once he had put the food in the fridge he went into his

text of the Goering letter After

le slips of paper he took out his

the translations in order first,

the YMCA, then

finally

girl f

Nuremberg
October 13, 19

Dear Colonel

Over the past year, we have come to know each other quite well. You have never disguised your distaste for the Nazi socialist party, but you have at all times behaved with the courtesy of an officer and a gentleman.

During the year you cannot have failed to notice that I have been receiving from one of the guards a regular supply of Havana cigars – one of the few pleasures I have been permitted, despite my incarceration. The cigars themselves have also served another purpose, as each one contained a capsule with a small amount of poison. Enough to allow me to survive my trial, while ensuring that I shall cheat the executioner.

My only regret is that you, as the officer in charge of the watch during the period when I am most likely to die, may be held responsible for something to which you were never a party. To make amends for this I enclose a document in the name of one Emmanuel Rosenbaum which should help with any financial difficulties you face in the near future.

All that will be required of you –

"Anyone at home?" shouted Lawrence. Adam folded up the pieces of paper, walked quickly over to the bookcase and inserted them alongside the original letter in the Bible seconds before Lawrence put his head round the door.

"Bloody traffic," said Lawrence cheerfully. "I can't wait to be appointed chairman of the bank and be given that luxury flat on the top floor, not to mention the chauffeur and the company car."

Adam laughed. "Had another hard day at the office, darling?" he mimicked, before joining him in the kitchen. Adam started removing food from the fridge.

"Guess who's coming to dinner," said Lawrence as each new delicacy appeared.

"A rather attractive German girl, I hope," said Adam.

"What do you mean, 'hope'?"

"Well, it could hardly have been described as a formal invitation so I'm not even certain she'll turn up"

"If that's the situation I may as well hang around in case she gives you the elbow and you need someone to help you eat that lot"

"Thanks for the vote of confidence, but I think you'll find it's your turn to be missing, presumed dead Anyway, what about Carolyn?" said Adam

"Carolyn was yesterday's girl, to quote the esteemed Harold Wilson. How did you come across your *gnädiges fräulein?*"

"She was serving at a food store in Knightsbridge"

"I see We're down to shop assistants now"

"I have no idea what she is or even what her name is, come to that," said Adam "But I am hoping to find out tonight As I said, your turn to disappear"

"*Natürlich*. As you see, you can rely on me to provide a helping hand if you need anything translated"

"Just put the wine in the fridge and lay the table"

"Are there no serious jobs for a man of my accomplishments to be entrusted with?" chuckled Lawrence

When eight o'clock chimed, the table was set and Adam had everything ready on the boil By eight thirty both of them stopped pretending and Adam served up two plates of frankfurters, salami and lettuce with a baked potato and sauerkraut sauce He then hung up his Goons apron behind the kitchen door and took the chair opposite Lawrence, who had begun pouring the wine

"Oh, *mein liebes Mädchen*, you look ravishing in that Harris tweed jacket," said Lawrence, raising his glass

Adam was just about to retaliate with the vegetable spoon when there was a loud knock on the front door The two men stared at each other before Adam leaped to open it Standing in the doorway was a man well over six foot with shoulders like a professional bouncer By his side, dwarfed by him, was the girl that Adam had invited to dinner

"This is my brother, Jochen," she explained Adam was immediately struck by how beautiful she looked in a dark blue patterned blouse and pleated blue skirt that fell just below the

nce Her long dark hair, now hanging loose looked as if it
ad just been washed and shone even under the forty watt
ght bulb that hung in the hall

"Welcome," said Adam, more than a little taken aback
"Jochen is just dropping me off"

"Yes, of course," said Adam "Do come in and have a drink,
ochen"

"No, I thank you I have a date as well, but I will pick up
eidi at eleven o'clock, if all right by you?"

"Fine by me," said Adam at last learning her name
The giant bent down and kissed his sister on both cheeks
e then shook hands with Adam before leaving them both on
e doorstep.

"I am sorry to be late," said Heidi "My brother did not
t back from work until after seven"

"It was no problem," said Adam, leading her into the
t "If you had come any earlier I wouldn't have been
ady for you By the way, this is my flatmate, Lawrence
mberton"

"In England the men also need a chaperone?" said Heidi
Both men laughed "No, no," said Lawrence "I was just
my way out. Like your brother, I already have a date As
s can see the table is only laid for two I'll be back around
ven, Adam, just to make sure you're safe" He smiled at
idi, put on his coat and closed the door behind him before
ner could object

"I hope I don't drive him away," said Heidi
"No, no," said Adam, as she took Lawrence's place at the
le "He's already late for his girlfriend Charming girl called
olyn, a social worker" He quickly topped up her wine,
tending it hadn't already been poured

"So I am going to eat my own sausages, after all," she said,
ehing And the laughter didn't stop for the rest of the

But now, Adam, I would like to know what you are doing when you are not picking up girls in food stores "

"I was in the army for nine years and I'm now hoping to join the Foreign Office "

"In what capacity, if that is the right expression?" Heidi asked

"It's the right expression, but I'm not sure I know the right answer," said Adam

"When someone says that about the Foreign Service it usually means they are a spy "

"I don't know what it means, to be honest, but they're going to tell me next week In any case, I don't think I'd make a very good spy But what are you going to do when you return to Germany?"

"Complete my final year at Mainz and then I hope to find a job as a television researcher."

"What about Jochen?" asked Adam.

"He will join my father's law practice as soon as he is arriving home "

"So how long will you be in London?" he found himself asking

"Another two months," she said "If I can stand the job "

"Why do you carry on with it if it's that bad?"

"There is no better way to test your English than impatient shoppers who speak all different accents "

"I hope you stay the full two months," said Adam

"So do I," she replied, smiling

When Jochen arrived back punctually at eleven o'clock, he found Adam and Heidi washing the dishes

"Thank you for a most interesting evening," she said, wiping her hands

"Not a good word," reprimanded Jochen "Not interesting, I think Lovely, happy, delightful, enjoyable perhaps, but not interesting "

"It was all those things," said Adam, "but it was also interesting."

She smiled

"May I come and buy some more sausages tomorrow?"

"I would like that," said Heidi, "but don't hold up any sour old women this time with translation demands By the way you never tell me why you needed the strange paragraph translated I have been wondering who is this Rosenbaum and what it is he left to someone "

"Next time perhaps," said Adam, looking a little embarrassed

"And next time you can bring my sister home yourself," said Jochen, as he shook Adam's hand firmly

After Heidi had left, Adam sat down and finished off the last glass of wine, aware that he hadn't spent such a lovely, happy, delightful, enjoyable and interesting evening for a long time

A black limousine with dark windows and unlit number plates remained parked in the VIP area of Zurich Kloten Fastidious Swiss policemen had twice gone up to the car and checked the driver's credentials before Major Romanov and Anna Petrova, emerged from the customs hall and took their places in the back of the car

It was already dark as the driver moved off towards the neon glow of the city When the car drew up outside the St Gothard Hotel the only words that passed between Romanov and the driver were, "I shall return to Moscow on the Tuesday morning flight "

Jacques Pontin, the manager of the hotel, was stationed at the door waiting to greet the new arrivals, he introduced himself immediately, and as soon as he had checked them both in he banged a little bell with the palm of his hand to summon a porter to assist the guests with their bags A moment later a young man in his early twenties, dressed in green livery, appeared

"Suite seventy-three and room seventy-four," Jacques instructed before turning back to Romanov "I do hope your stay will prove to be worthwhile Herr Romanov," he said "Please do not hesitate to call upon me if there is anything you need "

"Thank you," said Romanov as he turned to join the porter

who stood sentinel-like by the door of an open lift Romanov stood to one side to allow Anna to go in first The lift stopped at the seventh floor and the porter led the way down a long corridor to a corner suite He turned the key in the lock and invited the two guests to go in ahead of him The suite was as Romanov had expected, in a different league from the finest hotels he ever experienced in either Moscow or Leningrad When he saw the array of gadgets in the marble bathroom he reflected that even prosperous travellers to Russia, if seasoned visitors, brought their own bath plugs with them

"Your room is through there, madam," the porter informed the researcher, and unlocked an adjoining door Although smaller in size, the room maintained the same unassuming elegance The porter returned to Romanov, handed him his key and asked if there would be anything else he would require Romanov assured him there was nothing and passed over a five-franc note

Once again the porter gave a slight bow, and closing the door behind him, left Romanov to unpack while Anna Petrova went to her own room

Romanov started to undress and then disappeared into the bathroom He studied himself in the mirror Although he was vain about his looks, he was even more vain about the state of his physique At twenty-nine, despite being six feet, he still only weighed 165 pounds on Western scales, and his muscles remained hard and taut

By the time Romanov had returned to the bedroom, he could hear the shower beating down in the adjoining bathroom He crept over to the door and edged it open He could see quite clearly the outline of Anna standing in the steaming

[illegible]

Adam stepped out of the freezing shower Within minutes he was dressed and joined Lawrence in the kitchen for breakfast

"Still unable to charge you for hot water, am I?" Lawrence

: Adam peered over his flatmate's shoulder, trying to
the latest Test score
ny can't we produce any really fast fast bowlers?" he
rhetorically
n't stay and chatter to the unemployed," said
nce, picking up his briefcase. "Shah of Iran wants to
his financial problems with me. Sorry to rush off before
had your cornflakes but I can't afford to keep His
al Majesty waiting "
on his own, Adam boiled himself an egg and burned
oast before he turned to the newspaper to learn of the
asualties in Vietnam and President Johnson's proposed
the Far East At this rate he decided he wasn't going
the *Daily Mail*'s 'Housewife of the Year' competition
ntually cleared away in the kitchen, made his bed and
p behind Lawrence – nine years of self-discipline wasn't
change old habits that quickly – then he settled down
another day
alised he could no longer avoid making a decision He
e again at his desk and began to consider how to
official document translated without arousing further
n
st absent-mindedly he removed the Bible from the
lf and extracted the letter he had read the night before
l paragraph still puzzled him He considered Heidi's
ion once again

at will be required of you is to present yourself at the
ss printed on the top right-hand corner of the enclosed
nent, with some proof that you are Colonel Gerald
A passport should prove sufficient You will then be
a bequest that I have left to you in the name of
anuel Rosenbaum
ope it will bring you good fortune

urned his attention to the document He was still quite
o discern what the bequest could possibly be, let alone
it was of any value Adam mused over the fact that

such an evil man could involve himself in an act of kindness hours before he knew he was going to die – an act that now left him with no choice about his own involvement.

Romanov gathered the blankets together and in one movement hurled them on to the floor to expose Anna curled up like a child, knees almost touching her exposed breasts Anna's hand groped for a corner of the sheet to cover her naked body

"Breakfast in bed?" she murmured hopefully.

"Dressed in ten minutes, or no breakfast at all," came back the reply Anna lowered her feet gingerly on to the thick carpet and waited for the room to stop going round in circles before heading off towards the bathroom. Romanov heard the shower burst forth its jets "Ahhh," came the pitiful cry Romanov smiled when he remembered that he had left the indicator locked on dark blue

During breakfast in the dining room they mulled over the approach he intended to take with the bank if Petrova were able to confirm that the icon was in fact Rublev's original masterpiece. He kept looking up from the table and then suddenly, without warning, said, "Let's go "

"Why?" Anna asked, as she bit into another slice of toast Romanov rose from the table and without bothering to offer an explanation strode out of the room and headed straight for the lift. Petrova caught up with her master only moments before the lift gate closed "Why?" she asked again, but Romanov did not speak until they were both back in his suite He then threw open the large window that overlooked the railway station

[illegible]

reached the bottom rung of the fire escape, he ran to a passing tram. Petrova would never have made it if she hadn't been lifted bodily on to the tram by Romanov's sheer strength

"What's going on?" she asked, still puzzled.

I can't be sure," said Romanov, looking out of the back of the tram. "All I do know for certain is what the local CIA agent looks like."

The secretary looked back in the direction of the hotel, but all she could see was a mass of anonymous people walking up and down the pavement.

Romanov remained on the tram for about a mile before he jumped off and hailed a passing taxi going in the opposite direction.

"Bischoff et Cie," he said as he waited for his puffing assistant to join him.

The cab headed back in the direction of the hotel, winding in and out of the morning traffic, until it came to a halt in front of a large brown granite building that filled the entire block. Romanov paid off the driver and stood in front of imposing doors made of thick glass and covered in wrought iron welded to look like the branches of a tree. By the side of the doors, carved inconspicuously into the stone and inlaid with gilt, were the words 'Bischoff et Cie'. There was no other clue as to what kind of establishment lay within.

Romanov turned the heavy wrought-iron knob and the two Russians stepped into a spacious hall. On the left-hand side of the hall stood a solitary desk behind which a smartly dressed young man was seated.

"*Guten morgen, mein Herr,*" he said.

"Good morning," said Romanov. "We have an appointment with Herr Dieter Bischoff."

"Yes, Herr Romanov," said the receptionist checking the list of names in front of him. "Will you please take the lift to the [illegible] floor. [illegible] Herr Bischoff's secretary."

[illegible]

than a bank.

"Herr Bischoff will be with you in a moment," the lady said, withdrawing. Romanov remained standing while he took in

he room Three black-and-white framed photographs of ombre old men in grey suits, trying to look like sombre old nen in grey suits, took up most of the far wall, while on the ther walls were discreet but pleasant oils of town and country cenes of nineteenth-century Switzerland A magnificent oval Louis XIV table with eight carved mahogany chairs surrounding it dominated the centre of the room Romanov felt a twinge of envy at the thought that he could never hope to live in such style

The door opened and a man in his mid-sixties, followed by three other men in dark grey suits, entered the room One look at Herr Bischoff and Romanov knew whose photograph would

[illegible]

received the same courteous bow and handshake "May I in

[illegible]

At his gesture both Romanov and Anna sat down beside him

"I wonder if I might be permitted to check your passport?" asked Bischoff, as if to show that the formal business had begun. Romanov took out the little blue passport with a soft cover from his inside pocket and handed it over Bischoff studied it closely, as a philatelist might check an old stamp, and decided it was mint "Thank you," he said, as he returned it to its owner

Bischoff then raised his hand and one of the partners immediately left them "It will only take a moment for my son to fetch the icon we have in safe-keeping," he confided. "Meanwhile perhaps a little coffee – Russian," he added.

[illegible] within moments borne by yet another [illegible]ed lady.

[illegible]u," said Petrova, clearly a little overawed, but [illegible]n't speak again until Herr Bischoff's son re-

appeared with a small box and handed it over to his father

"You will understand that I have to treat this matter w the utmost delicacy," the old man confided "The icon m not turn out to be the one your Government is searching fo

"I understand," said Romanov

"This magnificent example of Russian art has been in c possession since 1938, and was deposited with the bank behalf of a Mr Emmanuel Rosenbaum"

Both visitors looked shocked

"*Nevozmozhno*," said Anna, turning to her master. "He wou never . . "

"[illegible]

first [illegible]

india. [illegible]

see t [illegible]

Cha.

H[illegible]

three men in grey suits each took a pace forward Romanov looked up "Under Swiss law we must have three witnesse when opening a box in someone else's name," explained th old man

Romanov nodded curtly

Herr Bischoff proceeded to unlock the metal box with a ke he produced from his pocket, while his son leaned over and undid a second lock with a different key The little ceremony completed, Herr Bischoff pushed up the lid of the box and turned it round to face his guests Romanov placed his hand into the box like an expectant child does with a Christmas stocking, and drew out the icon He stared at the beautiful painting A small wooden rectangle that was covered in tiny [illegible]

magnificent, as fine as any he had seen at the Winter Palace No one in the room was quite sure what would happen next as Romanov offered no opinion

It was Anna who finally spoke

"A masterpiece it is," she said, "and undoubtedly fifteenth ntury but as you can see it's not St George and the Dragon."

Romanov nodded his agreement, still unable to let go of the tle painting "But do you know the origin of this particular on?" Romanov asked

"Yes," Anna replied, glad to be appreciated for the first me "It is the Icon of St Peter, you see he holds the keys . ainted by Dionisiy in 1471, and although it is undoubtedly ne of the finest examples of his work, it is not the Tsar's on "

"But does it belong to the Russian people?" asked Romanov, till hopeful of some reward for all his trouble

"No, Comrade Major," said the researcher emphatically "It belongs to the Munich Gallery, from where it has been nissing since the day Hitler was appointed Reichs Chancellor "

Herr Bischoff scribbled a note on a piece of paper in front

the icon in the box and turning his key in his lock. His son completed the same routine with his own key and then departed with the unclaimed treasure Romanov rose, as he considered nothing more could be gained from the meeting – although he believed he had discovered Goering's alias, or one of them

"I wonder if I might be permitted to have a word with you in private, Herr Romanov," asked the elderly banker,

"Of course."

"It is rather a delicate matter I wish to put to you," said Herr Bischoff, "so I thought you might prefer your associate to leave us "

"That won't be necessary," said Romanov, unable to think of anything Bischoff might have to say that he wouldn't later need to discuss with Petrova.

"As you wish," said Bischoff "I am curious to discover if

there was any out of reason behind your request to see
"I don't understand what you mean," said P[illegible]
"I felt perhaps I knew the real reason you but w[illegible]
this bank in particular is start your enquiry"
"I didn't select you," said Romanov "You were o[illegible]
of he stopped himself
"I see," said Bischoff, himself now b[illegible]
mused "Then may I be permitted to ask you a few questi[illegible]
"Yes if you must," said Romanov now impatient [illegible]
away
"You are Alexander Petrovich Romanov?"
"You must already believe that or we would not h[illegible]
proceeded this far
"The only son of Peter Nicholevich Romanov?"
"Yes
"And grandson of Count Nicholas Alexandr[illegible]
Romanov?"
"Is this to be a history lesson on my family tree?" sa[illegible]
Romanov visibly irritated
"No, I just wanted to be sure of my facts as I am even m[illegible]
convinced it would be wise for your associate to leave us f[illegible]
moment," the old man suggested diffidently
"Certainly not," said Romanov "In the Soviet Union [illegible]
are all equal," he added pompously
"Yes, of course," said Bischoff, glancing quickly at A[illegible]
before continuing "Did your father die in 1946?"
"Yes He did," said Romanov beginning to feel disturb[illegible]
uncomfortable
"And you are the only surviving child?"
"I am," confirmed Romanov proudly
"In which case this bank is in possession " Bisch[illegible]
hesitated as a file was put in front of him by one of the m[illegible]
in grey He placed a pair of gold, half-moon spectacles on h[illegible]
nose, taking as long as he could over the little exercise
"Don't say anything more," said Romanov quietly
Bischoff looked up "I'm sorry, but I was given every reaso[illegible]
to believe your visit had been planned"
Petrova was now sitting on the edge of her seat, enjoyi[illegible]

moment of the unfolding drama She had already antici-
l exactly what was going to happen and was disappointed
Romanov turned to speak to her
'ou will wait outside," was all he said Petrova pouted
rose reluctantly to leave them, closing the door behind

schoff waited until he was certain the door was closed
slid the file across the table Romanov opened it gingerly
the top of the first page was his grandfather's nam
erlined three times Below the name were printed rov
n row of incomprehensible figures
I think you will find that we have carried out your grand
er's instructions in maintaining a conservative portfolio o
estments with his funds " Bischoff leaned across an
nted to a figure showing that the bank had achieved a
rage increase of 6 7 per cent per annum over the previou
ty-nine years
'What does this figure at the foot of the page represent?
ed Romanov
'The total value of your stocks, bonds and cash at pr
lock this morning It has been updated every Monday sin
ur grandfather opened an account with this bank in 1916
e old man looked up proudly at the three pictures on th
ll,
"*Bozhe Moi,*" said Romanov, as he took in the final figur
But what currency is it in?"
"Your grandfather only showed faith in the English pound
id Herr Bischoff
"*Bozhe Moi,*" Romanov repeated
"May I presume from your comment that you are n
ispleased with our stewardship?"
Romanov was speechless
"It may also interest you to know that we are in possessi
f several boxes, the contents of which we have no knowled

new school, unsure of his surroundings and not certain to whom he should turn for advice Most of the people who passed him went straight up the stairs and he was just about to follow them when he heard a voice say, "Up the stairs and straight through, madam The auction is due to start in a few minutes "

Adam turned and saw a man in a long, green coat The name 'Sotheby' was embroidered over his left-hand pocket

"Where do I go if I want something valued?" Adam asked

"Straight along the passage, sir, as far as you can go and you'll see a girl on the left-hand side in reception," barked his informant Adam thanked him presuming that the guide's former place of work could only have been on an Aldershot drill square He walked along to the reception area An old lady was explaining to one of the girls behind the counter that her grandmother had left the vase to her several years before and she wondered what it might be worth

The girl only glanced at the heirloom before asking, "Can you come back in about fifteen minutes? By then our Mr Makepeace will have had time to look at it and will be able to give you an estimate "

"Thank you, my dear," said the old lady expectantly The girl picked up the large ornate vase and carried it to a room in the back She returned a few moments later to be faced with Adam

"May I help you, sir?"

"I'm not sure," began Adam "I need some advice concerning an icon "

"Have you brought the piece with you, sir?"

"No, it's still abroad at the moment "

"Do you have any details?"

"Details?"

"Artist's name, date, size Or better still do you have a photograph of the piece?"

"No," said Adam sheepishly "I only know its title but I do have some documentation," he added, handing over the receipt he had shown the pastor

"Not a lot to go on," said the girl, studying the German

his annual revenue because I feel sure he would have been [illegible] [illegible] even if I'd given the matter than I have."

"You have told me everything I need to know," said Adam, [illegible] [illegible] asking, "Are knees at all valuable?"

"Once again I must confess that I am not the best [illegible] from whom to seek such an opinion. All I can tell you is [illegible] as with all art, the value of any object can vary from [illegible] extreme to the other without any satisfactory explanation [illegible] as normal mortals."

"Then there is no way of knowing the value of this paintings [illegible]?" asked Adam.

"I wouldn't venture an opinion, but no doubt the art auctioneers Sotheby's or Christie's might be willing to do so. After all, they claim in their advertisements that they have an expert in every field waiting to advise you."

"Then I shall put their claim to the test," said Adam, "and pay them a visit." Adam rose from his chair, shook hands with the pastor and said, "You have been most kind."

"Not at all," said the pastor. "I was only too pleased to assist you. It makes a change from Frau Gerber's mantel problems and the size of the churchwarden's marrows."

Adam took a bus up to Hyde Park Corner and jumped off as it turned left into Knightsbridge. He walked through the subway and continued briskly down Piccadilly towards the Ritz. He had read somewhere that Sotheby's was in Bond Street, although he couldn't remember having ever seen it.

He walked another hundred yards before turning left, where he shortened his stride to check all the signs on both sides of the road. He passed Gucci's, Cartier's, Asprey's and was beginning to wonder if his memory had failed him and whether he should check in the telephone directory. He continued on past the Irish Tourist Board and Celines before he finally spotted the gold lettering above a little newspaper kiosk on the far side of the road.

He crossed the one-way street and entered the front door by the side of the kiosk. He felt like a boy on his first day at a

"You won't be wasting my time," Sedgwick assured Adam "We sell many items for less than ten pounds, you know" Adam hadn't known and Sedgwick's gentle voice made him feel less apprehensive "Now am I to understand you do not have a photograph of this particular icon?"

"That's right," said Adam "The icon is still abroad, and to be honest I've never laid eyes on it"

"I see," said Sedgwick, folding up his glasses "But can you tell me anything of its provenance?"

"A little It is known as 'The Tsar's Icon' and the subject is St George and the Dragon"

"How strange," said Sedgwick "Someone else was enquiring after that particular painting only last week but he wouldn't leave his name"

"Someone else wanted to know about the Tsar's Icon?" said Adam

"Yes, a Russian gentleman, if I wasn't mistaken" Sedgwick tapped his glasses on his knee "I checked on it extensively for him but found little that wasn't already well documented The man wondered if it had ever passed through our hands, or even if we had heard of it I was able to explain to him that the great work by Rublev remains in the Winter Palace for all to see One can always be certain that it's an original from the Winter Palace because the Tsar s silver crown will be embedded in the back of the frame Since the fourteenth century many copies of Rublev's masterpiece have been made and they vary greatly in quality and value but the one he seemed interested in was a copy made for Tsar Nicholas by a court painter circa 1914 I was unable to find any trace of such an icon in any of the standard works on the subject Do you have any documentation on your icon?" Sedgwick enquired

"Not a lot," said Adam "Although I do have a copy of the receipt that was left to me in the will," he added, and handed it over

Mr Sedgwick once again unfolded his glasses before studying the paper for several moments "Excellent, quite excellent," he said eventually, "It seems to me that, as long as Roget et Cie will release it, a copy of the Tsar's icon painted by the

transcript. But I'll ask Mr Sedgwick, the head of our Ro
and Greek Icons department, if he can help you."

"Thank you," said Adam, as the girl picked up the ph
"Is Mr Sedgwick at liberty to advise a customer?" the gir
queried. He listened for a moment then replaced the phone
"Mr Sedgwick will be down in a few moments, if you'd
care to wait."

"Certainly," said Adam feeling something of a fraud. W
the girl attended to the next customer Adam waited for
Sedgwick and studied the pictures on the wall. There w
several photos of items that had come under the auctioneer
hammer in recent sales. A large painting by Picasso ca
'Trois Baigneuses' had been sold for fourteen thousa
pounds. As far as Adam could make out the brightly colour
oil was of three women on a beach dancing. He felt confide
they were women because they had breasts even if they were
in the middle of their chests. Next to the Picasso was a Deg
of a girl at a ballet lesson, this time there was no doubt it w
a girl. But the painting that most caught Adam's eye was
large oil by an artist he had never heard of called Jackso
Pollock that had come under the hammer for eleven thousan
pounds. Adam wondered what sort of people could afford t
spend such sums on works of art.

"Wonderful example of the artist's brushwork," said a voic
behind him. Adam turned to face a tall, cadaverous figur
with a ginger moustache and thinning red hair. His suit hun
on him as if from a coathanger. "My name is Sedgwick," h
announced in a donnish voice.

"Scott," said Adam, offering his hand.

"Well, Mr Scott, why don't we sit over here and then you

HAPTER EIGHT

A little more caviar Comrade?" enquired Petrova across t
nch table

Romanov frowned His pretence at 'strictly confident
formation' only to be passed on at the highest level h
erely elicited a knowing smile from his companion who w
so not inclined to believe that her boss had a pressi
ppointment at the Consulate that afternoon, an appointme
at he had forgotten to mention to her before

Anna held out a spoon brimming with caviar and pushed
wards Romanov as if she was trying to feed a reluctant bal

"Thank you – *no*," said Romanov firmly

"Suit yourself," said the young woman before it disappea
lown her own throat Romanov called for the bill When
as presented with the slip of paper he couldn't help think
hat for that price he could have fed a Russian family fo
nonth He paid without comment

"I'll see you back in the hotel later," he said curtly

"Of course," said Petrova, still lingering over her cof
"What time shall I expect you?"

Romanov frowned again "Not before seven," he replied

"And do you have any plans for me this afternoon, Comra
Major?"

"You may do as you please," said Romanov, and left
table without further word Once on the street he set of

By three o'clock Romanov was once again seated in

waited until they were both locked inside The guard preceded them down a corridor, not unlike that of a wine cellar with temperature and humidity gauges every few yards The light was barely bright enough to ensure that they did not lose their [illegible]

and turned it Then the chairman stepped forward and undid a second lock Father and son pushed open the nine inch thick door but neither made any attempt to enter the vault

"You are in possession of five boxes Numbers 1721, 1722 1723, 1724 "

"And 1725, no doubt," interrupted Romanov

"Precisely," said Herr Bischoff, as he removed a small package from his pocket and added, 'This is your envelope and the key inside it will open all five boxes " Romanov took the envelope and turned towards the open cavern ' But we must open the bank's lock first before you proceed," said Herr Bischoff "Will you be kind enough to follow us?" Romanov nodded and both Herr Bischoffs proceeded into the vault Romanov ducked his head and stepped in after them Young Mr Bischoff opened the upper lock of the five boxes, three small ones above two large ones, making a perfect cube 'Once we have left, Your Excellency, ' said the old man, "we shall pull the door closed, and when you require it to be opened you have only to press the red button on the side wall to alert us But I must warn you that at six o'clock the vault locks itself automatically and it cannot be reopened until nine the following morning However a warning alarm will sound at five forty-five." Romanov checked the clock on the wall three seventeen. He couldn't believe he would need over two hours to find out what was in the five boxes The two Herr Bischoffs bowed and left

Romanov waited impatiently for the vast door to close behind him. Once alone in the Aladdin's cave he looked around the room and estimated there must have been two or three thousand boxes filling the four walls, giving them the appearance of a library of safes He suspected there was more

had been considered one of the most enterprising merchants of the century And now it all belonged to Alex Romanov, an impecunious Government official who was already wondering how he could possibly enjoy such riches

It took Romanov a further hour to go through the contents of the remaining nine compartments When he reached the [illegible]

each of the compartments, but during the treasure hunt he had come across one object of such magnificence that he could not resist removing it He paused as he held up the long heavy gold chain weighted by a medallion, also made of solid gold, that hung from it On one side was an engraved picture of his grandfather – Count Nicholai Alexandrovich Romanov, a proud, handsome man – while on the other was a profile of his grandmother, so beautiful that she surely could have worn any of the jewellery in that treasure trove with distinction

For some time, Romanov held the chain in his hand before finally placing it over his head and letting the medallion fall from his neck He gave the piece one last look before tucking it under his shirt When he had replaced the lid on the last compartment he slid the box back into place and locked it.

For the second time that day Romanov's thoughts returned to his father and the decision he must have made when faced with such a fortune He had gone back to Russia with his secret Had he planned to rescue Alex from the life of drudgery that was all he could look forward to? His father had always assured him that he had an exciting future but there were secrets he was too young to share and he, in turn, had passed that information on to the authorities His reward a place at the Komsomol But his father must have taken that secret to the grave because Alex would never have learned of the fortune if it had not been for Poskonov

His mind turned to the old banker Had he known all along or was it just a coincidence that he had been sent by Poskonov to this bank first? Members of his chosen profession didn't survive if they believed in coincidence

[illegible] He checked the contents of his own box [illegible] and [illegible] what has been [illegible]

He decided to start with one of the smaller boxes. He [illegible] and began to lift the lock clasp before pushing out the drawer [illegible] but it was full of papers. He locked them [illegible] letters were title deeds to many large tracts of land in the Ukraine and Russia [illegible] once worth millions, now [illegible] to the New Soviet State. As he checked each document [illegible] realizing that with the paper they were written on [illegible] Romanov moved to the second box which he discovered contained the bonds and certificates of companies once owned by His Excellency Count Nicholas Alexandrovich Romanov. The last time they had declared a profit was in 1914. He [illegible] the system he had been born under as he moved on to the [illegible] box which contained only one document, his grandfather's will. It took only moments to discover that it had all been left to his father and therefore he was the lawful owner of everything and nothing.

Dismayed, Romanov knelt down to study the two large boxes, both of which looked big enough to hold a cello. He hesitated before placing his key in the lock, turning it and pulling out the vast container.

He stared down in anticipation.

It was empty. He could only presume that it had been that way for over fifty years unless his father had removed everything and there was no reason to believe that. He quickly unlocked the fifth box and in desperation pulled it open.

The box was split into twelve equal compartments. He raised the lid of the first compartment and stared down in disbelief. Before him lay precious stones of such size, variety and colour that would have made anyone who was not royal gasp. Gingerly he lifted the lid off the second compartment, to find it contained pearls of such quality that one single string

n you put me through to Mr Pemberton, please?" said Adam
here was a long pause "We don't have a Mr Pemberton
king here, sir"
That is Barclays International in the City, isn't it?"
Yes, sir"
'Mr Lawrence Pemberton I feel certain I've got the right
nch."
The silence was even longer this time "Ah, yes," came back
eventual reply "Now I see which department he works in
find out if he's in" Adam heard the phone ringing in the
ckground
"*He doesn't seem to be at his desk at the moment, sir, would*
u like to leave a message?"
"No thank you," said Adam, and replaced the receiver He
t alone thinking, not bothering to switch on the light as it
ew darker If he was to carry through the idea he still needed
me information which Lawrence as a banker should find
sy to supply.
A key turned in the door and Adam watched Lawrence
ter and switch the light on He looked startled when he saw
dam seated in front of him
"How does one open a Swiss bank account?" were Adam's
rst words
"I can't imagine one would find it that easy if all you have
o offer is next week's unemployment cheque," said Lawrence
'Mind you, they usually keep a code name for English cus-
omers," he added, as he put his copy of the *Evening News* on
he table "Yours could be 'pauper'"
"It may surprise you to learn that it was a serious question,"
aid Adam
"Well," said Lawrence, taking the question seriously, "in
truth, anyone can open a Swiss bank account as long as they
have a worthwhile sum to deposit And by worthwhile I mean
at least ten thousand pounds"
"Yes, but how would you go about getting the money out?"
"That can be done over the phone or in person, and in that
way Swiss banks don't differ greatly from any bank in England
Few customers, however, would risk the phone, unless they're

A false move and the State would not hesitate to send
to the same grave as his father and grandfather. He w
have to be at his most skilful when he next came into con
with the old banker, otherwise he might not live to ch
between power in his homeland or wealth in the West.

"After I have found the Tsar's icon I will make my decis
he said, quite audibly. He turned suddenly as the cl
bell's piercing sound rang out. He checked the clock and
surprised by how much time he had spent in the locked r
He walked towards the vault door and on reaching it pr
the red button without looking back. The great door w
open to reveal two anxious-looking Herr Bischoffs. The
stepped quickly into the vault, walked over to the five b
and made safe the bank's locks.

"We were beginning to get quite worried about the ti
said the old man. "I do hope you found everything to
satisfaction."

"Entirely," said Romanov. "But what happens if I
unable to return for some considerable time?"

"It's of no importance," Herr Bischoff replied. "The b
will not be touched again until you come back, and as
are all hermetically sealed your possessions will rema
perfect condition."

"What temperature are the boxes kept at?"

"Fifty degrees fahrenheit," said Herr Bischoff, some
puzzled by the question.

"Are they airtight?"

"Certainly," replied the banker. "And watertight, not
the basement has ever been flooded," he added quite serio

"So anything left in them is totally safe from any inv
gation?"

"You are only the third person to look inside those boxe
fifty years," came back the firm response.

"Excellent," said Romanov, looking down at Herr Bisch
"Because there is just a possibility that I shall want to ret
tomorrow morning, with a package of my own to deposit."

still had no way of being sure which – copy of the Tsar's
1. He lay awake that night recalling the words in his father's
er "If there is anything to be gained from the contents of
envelope I make only one request of you, namely that
r mother should be the first to benefit from it without ever
ng told how such good fortune came about."

hen Romanov returned to the hotel, via the Russian Consul-
, he found Petrova in her room dressed in jeans and a bright
ak jersey, sitting in a corner reading, her legs dangling over
e side of the chair

"I hope you had a fruitful afternoon?" he enquired, politely.

"I certainly did," Anna replied "The galleries in Zurich
e well worthy of a visit But tell me about *your* afternoon.
d it also turn out to be fruitful?"

"It was a revelation, my little one, nothing less Why don't
e have a quiet supper in my room so I can tell you all about
while we celebrate in style?"

"What a magnificent idea," said the researcher "And may
be responsible for ordering dinner?"

"Certainly," said Romanov.

Petrova dropped her book on the floor and began to concen-
ate on the extensive *à la carte* menu that had been left
y Romanov's bedside table. She spent a considerable time
electing each dish for their banquet and even Romanov was
mpressed when it finally appeared

Anna had chosen as an entrée gravad laks edged with dill
uce. Accompanying it was a half-bottle of Premier Cru
hablis 1958.

Romanov told her of the
ontents of
and as he described each
eyes grew larger and larger.
only once interrupted, by a
on which sat a silver salver
lamb surrounded
To accompany this
a Gevrey Chambertin.
souffle, required in the
Yquem. She had

selected the 'forty-nine, which only made her lapse into singing Russian folk songs which Romanov felt, given the circumstances, was somewhat inappropriate.

As she drained the last drop of wine in her glass Petro rose and, slightly unsteady, said, "To Alex, the man I love

Romanov nodded his acknowledgment and suggested might be time for them to go to bed, as they had to catch t first flight back to Moscow the following morning He wheel the trolley out into the corridor and placed a 'Do not distur' sign over the door knob

"A memorable evening," smiled the researcher, as sh flicked off her shoes Romanov stopped to admire her as sh began to remove her clothes, but when he unbuttoned h shirt, the researcher stopped undressing and let out a gasp surprise

"It's magnificent," she said in awe Romanov held up th gold medallion "A bauble compared with the treasures I le behind," he assured her

"Comrade lover," Anna said in a childlike voice, pullin him towards the bed, ' you realise how much I adore, admir and respect you?"

"Um," said Romanov

"And you also know," she continued, "that I have neve asked you for any favour in the past "

"But I have a feeling you are about to now," said Romanov as she lifted back the sheet

"Only that if the gold chain is nothing more than a mere bauble, perhaps you might allow me to wear it occasionally?"

"Occasionally?" said Romanov, staring into Anna's eyes "Why occasionally? Why not permanently, my darling?" and without another word he removed the gold chain from around his neck and placed it over the young girl's head Anna sighed as she fingered the thick gold rings that made up the chain that Romanov didn't let go of

"You're hurting me, Alex,' she said with a little laugh "Please let go " But Romanov only pulled the chain a little

shouldn't let you in on this," said Lawrence, peering at
photograph of Ted Dexter the defeated English cricket
ain, "but the Governor of the Bank of England wants my
s on whether we should devalue the pound from $2 80 to
0 "

And what are your views?"

I've already explained to the fellow that the only 240 I
w is the bus that runs between Golders Green and Edgware,

I

awrence had changed considerably over the years since he
left Wellington Perhaps it was that Adam could only
ember him as school captain and then leaving with the top
sics scholarship to Balliol He had seemed so serious in
se days and certainly destined for greater things No one
ld have thought it possible that he would end up as an
estment analyst at Barclays DCO At Oxford contempo-
ies half joked about him being a cabinet minister Was it
sible that one always expected too much of those idols who
re only a couple of years older than oneself? On leaving
ool their friendship had grown And when Adam was posted
Malaya, Lawrence never accepted the army report that
ted his friend as missing presumed dead And when Adam
nounced that he was leaving the army, Lawrence asked
no explanation and couldn't have been kinder about his
employment hoped that he would be given
e chance to p

couple of rashers of bacon.
could do before nine thirty,
e a note to his sister,

Mr Holbrooke – Adam
name – couldn't hide
Scott Now that
r Scott, Adam wanted to
more surprised by his

envelopes, which was yet another missive from the Foreign Office Co-ordination Staff

Captain Scott – the rank already seemed out of place – was requested to attend a medical at 122 Harley Street at three o'clock on the following Monday, to be conducted by Dr John Vance

Finally he opened the other brown envelope and pulled out a letter from Lloyds, Cox and King's branch in Pall Mall, informing Dear Sir/Madam that they had been in receipt of a cheque for five hundred pounds from Holbrooke, Holbrooke and Gascoigne, and that his current account at the close of business the previous day was in credit to the sum of £272 18 4d When Adam checked through the account it showed that at one point he had, for the first time in his life, run up an overdraft – a situation that he knew would have been frowned upon had he still been in the army, for as little as twenty years before it was in some regiments a court-martial offence for an officer to be overdrawn

What would his brother officers have said if he told them he was about to remove two hundred pounds from the account with no real guarantee of a return?

Once Adam had finished dressing, he rejoined Lawrence in the kitchen

"How was the Shah of Iran?" he asked

"Oh, very reasonable really," said Lawrence, turning a page of the *Daily Telegraph*, "considering the circumstances. Promised he would do what he could about his current financial embarrassment, but he was a bit pushed until the West allowed him to raise the price of oil "

"Where did you eventually take him to lunch?" asked Adam enjoying the game

"I offered him a shepherd's pie at the Green Man, but the bloody fellow became quite snotty It seems he and the Empress had to pop along to Harrods to be measured up for a new throne Would have gone along with him, of course, but my boss wanted his wastepaper basket emptied, so I missed out on the Harrods deal as well "

"So what are you up to today?"

"I shouldn't let you in on this," said Lawrence, peering at

$2 40 "

"And what are your views?"

"I've already explained to the fellow that the only 240 I know is the bus that runs between Golders Green and Edgware, and if I don't get a move on I'll miss my beloved 14," said Lawrence, checking his watch Adam laughed as he watched his friend slam his briefcase shut and disappear out of the door

Lawrence had changed considerably over the years since he had left Wellington Perhaps it was that Adam could only remember him as school captain and then leaving with the top classics scholarship to Balliol He had seemed so serious in those days and certainly destined for greater things No one would have thought it possible that he would end up as an investment analyst at Barclays DCO At Oxford contemporaries half joked about him being a cabinet minister Was it possible that one always expected too much of those idols who were only a couple of years older than oneself? On leaving school their friendship had grown And when Adam was posted to Malaya, Lawrence never accepted the army report that posted his friend as missing presumed dead And when Adam announced that he was leaving the army, Lawrence asked for no explanation and couldn't have been kinder about his unemployment problem Adam hoped that he would be given the chance to repay such friendship

Adam fried himself an egg and a couple of rashers of bacon There wasn't much more he could do before nine thirty, although he did find time to scribble a note to his sister, enclosing a cheque for fifty pounds

At nine thirty he made a phone call Mr Holbrooke – Adam wondered if he actually had a christian name – couldn't hide his surprise at receiving a call from young Mr Scott. Now that *my* father is dead, *I* must be old Mr Scott, Adam wanted to tell him. And Holbrooke sounded even more surprised by his

"Economy," said Adam, amused by the thought that anyone ght think he would want to go first class

"That will be thirty-one pounds please, sir " Adam paid in sh and placed the ticket in his inside pocket, before returning the flat for a light lunch During the afternoon he called eidi who agreed to join him for dinner at the Chelsea Kitchen eight o'clock There was one more thing Adam needed to certain about before he joined Heidi for dinner

omanov was woken by the ringing of the phone.

"Yes," he said

"Good morning, Comrade Romanov, it's Melinac, the econd Secretary at the Embassy "

"Good morning, Comrade, what can I do for you?"

"It's about Comrade Petrova," Romanov smiled at the hought of her now lying in the bath "Have you come across he girl since you reported her missing?"

"No," replied Romanov "And she didn't sleep in her bed ast night "

"I see," said the Second Secretary "Then your suspicions hat she might have defected are beginning to look a serious possibility "

"I fear so," said Romanov, "and I shall have to make a full eport of the situation to my superiors the moment I get back to Moscow "

"Yes, of course, Comrade Major "

"I shall also point out that you have done everything possible to assist me with this problem, Comrade Second Secretary "

"Thank you, Comrade Major "

"And brief me the moment you come up with any information that might lead us to where she is "

"Of course, Comrade Major " Romanov replaced the phone and walked across to the bathroom in the adjoining room He stared down at the body hunched up in the bath Anna's eyes were bulging in their sockets, her face contorted and the skin already grey After throwing a towel over the dead researcher's head and locking the door, he went into his own bathroom for an unusually long shower

request "No doubt connected in some way with that end-
ope," he muttered, but agreed to put a copy of his father's will
in the post that afternoon

Adam's other requirements could not be carried out over
the phone, so he locked up the flat and jumped on a bus
heading up the King's Road He left the double-decker at
Hyde Park Corner and made his way to Lloyds Bank in Pall
Mall, where he joined a queue at the Foreign Exchange
counter

"May I help you?" asked a polite assistant when he finally
reached the front

"Yes," said Adam "I would like fifty pounds in Swiss
francs, fifty pounds in cash and a hundred pounds in traveller's
cheques "

"What is your name?" she enquired

"Adam Scott "

The girl entered some calculations on a large desk
machine before cranking the handle round several times. She
looked at the result, then disappeared for a few moments
return with a copy of the bank statement Adam had received
in the morning post

[illegible] will be £202 1s
70 16s 4d

"Yes," said Adam, but didn't add that in truth it would
only be £20 16s 4d the moment his sister presented her cheque
He began to hope that the Foreign Office paid by the week,
otherwise it would have to be another frugal month Unless of
course

[illegible] the sum of the ten traveller's cheques in the
[illegible] five hundred
[illegible] cash It was
[illegible] n out at one
time

Another bus journey took him to the British European
Airways terminal in Cromwell Road where he asked the girl
to book him on a return flight to Geneva

"First class or economy?" she asked

"You are too kind, Herr Romanov," said Jacques "Will there be anything else?"

"Perhaps you would be good enough to have my account prepared so that there will be no delay "

"Certainly "

Romanov put the phone down wishing he could export such service to Moscow He only waited a moment before he dialled the first of two local numbers On both occasions his wishes were immediately granted As he replaced the phone for the third time there was a gentle tap on the door Romanov went quickly over to answer it. A young porter stood in the corridor, a large laundry basket by his side He smiled politely Romanov merely nodded and pulled in the basket "Please return as soon as the taxi has arrived," said Romanov The porter bowed slightly, but said nothing

As soon as the porter had left, Romanov locked the door and put the chain in place before wheeling the laundry basket into the main bedroom and leaving it by the side of the bed He undid the tough leather straps and threw open the lid

Next, he unlocked the bathroom door and lifted Petrova's stiff body in his arms before trying to cram it into the basket Rigor mortis had already gripped the body, the legs refused to bend and the researcher didn't quite fit in Romanov placed the naked Petrova on the floor He held his fingers out straight and suddenly brought them down with such force on the right leg that it broke like a branch in a storm He repeated the action on her left leg Like the guillotine, it didn't require a second attempt He then tucked the legs under her body It amused Romanov to consider that, had it been he who had been murdered, Anna Petrova would never have been able to get him in the basket whatever she had tried to break Romanov then wheeled the trolley into the researcher's bedroom and, after emptying all her drawers, including Anna's clothes, clean and dirty, her shoes, her toilet bag, toothbrush and even an old photograph of himself he hadn't realised she possessed he threw them in the basket on top of her Once he had removed the gold medallion from around her neck and was certain that

eturning to your hotel in the near future Thank you sir," the
nanager said as Romanov slipped into the back seat leaving
asques to close the door behind him

When Romanov arrived at the Swissair office his suitcase
vas checked in and he waited only moments before continuing
n to the bank. Herr Bischoff's son, accompanied by another
nan, also clad in a grey suit, was waiting in the hall to greet
im

"How pleasant to see you again so soon," volunteered the
young Herr Bischoff His deep voice took Romanov by surprise
The taxi driver waited by the open boot while Herr Bischoff's
companion, a man of at least six foot four and heavily built,
lifted out the laundry basket as if it were a sponge cake
Romanov paid the fare and followed Herr Bischoff into the far
left.

"We are fully prepared for your deposition following your
phone call," said Herr Bischoff "My father was only sorry
not to be present personally He had a long-standing engage-
ment with another customer and only hopes that you will
understand." Romanov waved his hand

The lift travelled straight to the ground floor where the
guard, on seeing young Herr Bischoff, unlocked the great steel
cage. Romanov and the two bankers proceeded at a leisurely
pace down the corridor, while the giant carried the basket in
their wake.

Standing with folded arms by the vault door was another of
the partners Romanov recognised from the previous day Herr
Bischoff nodded and the partner placed his key in the top lock
of the vault door without a word Herr Bischoff then turned
the second lock and together they pushed open the massive
steel door. Herr Bischoff and his partner walked in ahead of
Romanov and opened the top lock of all five of his boxes while
the guard placed the laundry basket on the floor beside them

"Will you require any assistance?" asked Herr Bischoff as
he handed his Russian client a personal sealed envelope

"No thank you," Romanov assured him, but did not relax
until he had seen the vast door close behind him and all four
of his Swiss helpers left invisibly on the other side

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he covered up the body with a hotel bath towel, and sprayed it with a liberal amount of Chanel No 5 that had been left courtesy of the hotel

Finally he strapped the lid down securely and wheeled the creaking basket out and left it by the outer door

Romanov began to pack his own case but there was a knock on the door before he had finished

"Wait," he said firmly There was a muffled reply of "Ja, *mein Herr* A few moments later Romanov opened the door The porter entered, nodded to him and began to tug at the laundry basket, but it took a firm shove from Romanov's foot before it got moving The porter sweated his way down the corridor as Romanov walked by the side of the basket, carrying his suitcase When they reached the rear of the hotel Romanov watched as the basket was wheeled safely into the freight elevator before he stepped in himself

When the ground floor doors opened Romanov was relieved to be greeted by Jacques who was standing by a large Mercedes waiting for him with the boot already open The taxi driver and the porter lifted up the laundry basket and wedged it into the boot, but Romanov's suitcase could not be fitted in as well so it had to be put in the front of the car alongside the driver's seat

"Shall we forward your bill to the Consulate, *mein Herr*" asked Jacques

"Yes, that would be helpful "

"I do hope everything has worked out to your satisfaction" said Jacques, as he held open the back door of the Mercedes for his departing guest

"Entirely," said Romanov

"Good good And will your young colleague be joining you?" asked the manager, looking back over his shoulder towards the hotel

"No, she won't," said Romanov "She has already gone to the airport ahead of me "

"Of course," said Jacques, "but I am sorry to have missed her Do please pass on my best wishes "

"I certainly will," said Romanov, "and I look forward

hen they stepped out of the lift on the ground floor, anov spotted Herr Bischoff's father with another cus-r.

Rolls-Royce accompanied by a police motorcycle whisked hah of Iran quickly away, and the chairman discreetly d his farewell

hen they reached the entrance to the bank, the young Bischoff bowed "We shall look forward to seeing you when you are next in Zurich, Your Excellency," he said hank you," said Romanov, who shook hands with the g man and walked out on to the pavement to find the ymous black car waiting to take him to the airport

e cursed. This time he *did* spot the agent he had seen er in the hotel

Once he felt certain he was al[illegible]
large box he knew to be empty it was smaller than [illegible]
recalled Beads of sweat appeared on his forehead as he [illegible]
locked it, pulled it out and raised the airtight lid It was [illegible]
to be a tight fit Romanov unstrapped the laundry basket [illegible]
removed everything except the body He stared down at [illegible]
contorted face, the deep marks in the skin around the neck [illegible]
[illegible] and the researcher [illegible]
[illegible] than he
[illegible] rst. Ever
[illegible]
then he had to adjust her various limbs in order that the lid could be shut had Anna been even an inch taller the exercise would have proved pointless He then stuffed the girl's belongings down at the sides of her body, leaving only the Chanel covered towel behind in the laundry basket

Romanov proceeded to replace the lid on the airtight box before pushing it back securely in place and locking it He then double-checked it could not be opened without his own personal key He was relieved to find he could not budge it He hesitated for a moment glancing at the second large box but accepted that this was not the time to indulge himself that would have to wait for another occasion Satisfied that everything was back in place he closed and strapped down the lid of the laundry basket and wheeled it back to the entrance of the vault He pressed the little red button

"I do hope you found everything in order," said the young Herr Bischoff once he had returned from locking the five boxes

"Yes, thank you," said Romanov "But would it be possible for someone to return the laundry basket to the St Gothard Hotel?"

"Of course," said the banker, who nodded towards the large man

"And I can be assured that the boxes will not be touched in my absence?" he asked as they walked down the corridor

"Naturally, Your Excellency," said Herr Bischoff looking somewhat aggrieved at such a suggestion "When you return," he continued, "you will find everything exactly as you left it"

Well, not exactly, Romanov thought to himself

d badgered Adam until he finally collapsed in a heap on the or, incapable of lifting an evening paper

"Not bad, sir. I feel sure the Foreign Office will be able to d some niche for you Mind you," he added, "as most of al lot are about as wet as a dish cloth even you'll have a ance to shine "

"You are most flattering, Sergeant Major," said Adam from supine position

"Up, sir," the instructor bellowed. Adam unwillingly got to s feet as quickly as his tired body would allow.

"Don't tell me, Sergeant Major "

"It's the recovery that proves fitness, not the speed," they id in unison

"Sad day when you left the army," said the instructor to dam once they were back in the Queen's Club changing om. "Can't name a lot of officers who have put me on the oor " The instructor touched his chin tenderly, "That will ach me to underestimate a man who survived nine months Chink food. So let's hope the Foreign Office doesn't understimate you as well."

The sergeant major rose from the bench by his locker "Same ime Wednesday?"

"Can't make it Wednesday, Sergeant Major I may not be ack from a trip to Geneva "

"Swanning around Europe nowadays, are we?"

"I could manage Thursday morning if that suits you," Adam said, ignoring the jibe

"Your check-up with the quack is next Monday, if I remember correctly "

"Right."

"Thursday at ten then, it will give you a little longer to think about my right-hook "

The Chairman of the KGB studied the report on the desk in front of him something didn't ring true He looked up at Romanov "Your reason for visiting Bischoff et Cie was because they claimed to be in possession of a fifteenth-century

CHAPTER NINE

"Kill him, sir," the corporal whispered as Adam's ca
"Not much hope of that," muttered Adam as he bo
into the centre of the ring

The lean, muscle-bound instructor stood waiting fo
"Let's have a few rounds and see how you make o
Adam bobbed and weaved around the Physical T
Instructor looking for an opening

Adam led with a left and received a tap on the no
trouble "Keep your guard up," said the sergeant majo
led again, catching the instructor a full blow on t
but was punished with a sharp left jab into the s
head He wobbled and his ear tingled but this time
aged to keep his guard up when a right and left
"You're feeble, sir, that's your problem You
knock the skin off a rice pudding" Adam feinted
right and then swung a left with such force tha
caught the sergeant major full on the chin he stag
fell.

The corporal standing by the side of the ring smi
instructor remained on the floor Eventually he m
get back on his feet

"I'm sorry," said Adam, his guard up and read
"Don't be sorry, you bloody fool sir Yo
bloody good punch A technical knockout, to be a
I'll have to wait for a day or two to seek my rever
breathed a sigh of relief and lowered his guard
doesn't me [illegible] the weight train
now, sir E [illegible] es"
[illegible] chased, kic

e you were sleeping with that night, perhaps?" Romanov
t a shiver of fear as he wondered how much Zaborski
ally knew Zaborski paused and pretended to be checking
mething else in the report. "Perhaps she could tell us why
u felt it necessary to return to Bischoff et Cie a second time"
nce again, Zaborski paused "I think I may have to open an
quiry into the disappearance of Comrade Petrova Because,
omrade Romanov, by the time you returned to the bank a
ird time," said the Chairman, his voice rising with each
ord, "every second-rate spy from here to Istanbul knew that
were searching for something" The Chairman paused
omanov was still desperate to find out if Zaborski had any
al evidence Neither man spoke for some time "You have
ways been a loner, Major Romanov, and I do not deny that
times your results have allowed me to overlook certain
discretions But I am not a loner, Comrade I am a desk
an, no longer allowed your freedom of action" He fiddled
ith the paperweight of Luna 9 on the desk in front of
im.

"I am a file man, a paper man I make reports in triplicate,
answer queries in quadruplicate, explain decisions in quin-
plicate. Now I will have to explain the circumstances of
etrova's strange disappearance to the Politburo in multiplic-
e."

Romanov remained silent, something the KGB had taken
veral years to instil into him He began to feel confident that
aborski was only guessing If he had suspected the truth the
terview would have taken place in the basement where a less
l "

"

usly than any other nation on earth You, Comrade
omanov, would have found your chosen profession easier to
llow had you been born in Africa, South America or even
os Angeles."

Still Romanov did not venture an opinion

"The General Secretary informed me at one o'clock this

orning that he is not impressed by your latest efforts, dis-
actly unimpressed were the exact words he used, especially
fter your excellent start All he is interested in, however, is
nding the Tsar's icon, and so, for the time being, Comrade,
he has decided there will be no investigation But if you ever
act in such an irresponsible way again it will not be an enquiry
you are facing, but a tribunal, and we all know what happened
to the last Romanov that faced a tribunal "

He closed the file "Against my better judgment and because
we are left with less than a week, the General Secretary has
allowed you a second chance in the belief that you will indeed
come up with the Tsar's icon Do I make myself clear, Com-
rade?" he barked

"Very clear, Comrade Chairman," said Romanov, and turn
ing smartly on his heel quickly left the room

The Chairman of the KGB waited for the door to close
before his eyes settled back on the file What was Romanov
up to, Zaborski needed to know suddenly realising that his
own career might now be on the line He flicked down a switch
on the little console by his side "Find Major Valchek," he
ordered

"I've never actually had champagne and caviar," admitted
Adam, as he looked up at the beautiful girl who sat opposit
him across the table He loved the way she tied her hair, an
the way she dressed, the way she laughed, but most of all th
way she smiled

"Well, don't get frightened, because I can't imagine cavi
will ever find its place on this particular menu," teased Hei
"But perhaps soon when you are the proud owner of the Tsa
icon, that is if Mr Rosenbau "

Adam put a finger to his lips "No one else knows ab
that, not even Lawrence "

"That may be wise," Heidi whispered "He will only ex
you to invest all the money you make from the sale i
boring bank "

"What makes you think I'd sell it?" asked Adam, try
discover how much she had worked out.

f you own a Rolls-Royce and you are out of work you do
hen go and hire a chauffeur "
But I've only got a motorbike "
And you'll have to sell that as well if the icon turns out to
orthless," she said, laughing
Would you like a coffee to follow?" asked the waiter, who
already clearing their table in the hope of fitting in two
e customers before the night was out.
Yes, please Two cappuccinos," said Adam He turned his
e back to Heidi "Funnily enough," he continued as the
ter retreated, "the only time I've ever rung Lawrence at
bank the telephonist couldn't immediately locate him."
What's so surprising about that?" asked Heidi.
'It was as if they had never heard of him," said Adam, "but
haps I was imagining it "
'A bank that size must have over a thousand employees.
u could go years without knowing everyone who worked
ere "
'I suppose you're right," Adam said, as two coffees were
ced in front of them
"When do you plan on going to Geneva?" Heidi asked, after
e had tried a sip of the coffee and found it too hot
"First thing Wednesday morning I hope to be back the
me evening "
"Considerate "
"What do you mean?" asked Adam
"To choose my one day off to fly away," she said. "Not very
mantic."
"Then why not come with me?" he asked, leaning across
e table to take her hand.
"That might turn out to be more significant than sharing
our sausages "
"I would hope so and in any case, you could be most useful "
"You do have a way with words," said Heidi
"You know I didn't mean it that way It's simply that I
lon't speak German or French and I've never been to Switzer-
and other than on a school skiing trip – and then I kept falling
ver " Heidi tried her coffee again

"Well?" said Adam, not letting go of her hand

"The Swiss speak perfect English," she said eventuall "and should you have any problem with the bank, you ca always get in touch with Lawrence"

"It would only be for the day," said Adam

"And a waste of your money"

"Not very romantic," said Adam.

"Touché"

"Think about it," said Adam "After the cost of your r flight I will be left with only £19,969 I don't know ho get by."

"You really mean it, don't you?" said Heidi, sour serious for the first time. "But women are not impu creatures"

"You could always bring Jochen along with you"

Heidi laughed "He wouldn't fit on the plane"

"Do say you'll come," said Adam

"On one condition," said Heidi thoughtfully

"Separate planes?" said Adam grinning

on the lips "Perhaps it will take more than one day," he sa "Then what would you say?"

"I would demand separate hotels," replied Heidi, "i wasn't for the high cost of the Swiss franc," she added

"You are always so reliable, Comrade Romanov You ful the primary qualification for a successful banker" Roman studied the old ma carefully l oking for some sign that l new exactly what had been awa ting him at the bank

"And you are always so efficient, C nrade Poskonov, e paused, "the on, qualification necessary in my chose rofession"

"Good heavens, we are beginning to sound like a couple c geing commissars at an annual reunion How was Zurich" e asked as he lit a cigarette

'Like a Polish tractor The bits that worked were fine "
'From that I assume the bits that didn't work failed to
oduce the Tsar's icon," the chairman said
'Correct, but Bischoff turned out to be most helpful, as was
cques. My every need was catered for "
'Your every need?"
"Yes," replied Romanov
"Good man, Bischoff," said the banker "That's why I
nt you to him first " The old man slumped down into his
air
"Was there any other reason you sent me to him first?"
ked Romanov
"Five other reasons," said Poskonov, "but we'll not bother
ith any of them until you have found your icon "
"Perhaps I'd like to bother now," said Romanov firmly
"I've outlived two generations of Romanovs," said the old
an raising his eyes. "I wouldn't want to outlive a third
et's leave it at that for now, I'm sure we can come to an
nderstanding when the spotlight is no longer on you "
Romanov nodded.
"Well, you will be pleased to learn that I have not been idle
n your absence. But I fear my results also resemble a Polish
ractor "
The banker waved Romanov to a seat before he reopened
us file which had grown in size since he had last seen it
'Originally," the chairman began, "you presented me with a
ist of fourteen banks, eleven of which have now confirmed
hat they are not in possession of the Tsar's icon "
"I have been wondering about that – is their word to be
aken at face value?" asked Romanov
"Not necessarily," said the banker "But on balance the
Swiss prefer not to become involved rather than tell a deliberate
lie In time the liar is always found out, and I still, from this
office, control the cash flow of eight nations I may not wield
what they would call financial clout but I can still put the odd
spanner in the works of the capitalist monetary system "
"That still leaves us with three banks?" said Romanov.
"Correct, Comrade The first is Bischoff et Cie, whom

CHAPTER TEN

The elderly-looking man took his place at the back of the taxi queue It was hard to estimate his height because he looked so bent and frail A large overcoat that might have been even older than its wearer reached almost to the ground and the fingers that could only just be seen peeping through the sleeves were covered in grey woollen mittens One hand clung on to a little leather suitcase, with the initials E R in black looking so worn that it might have belonged to his grandfather

One would have had to bend down or be very short to see the old man's face – a face that was dominated by a nose that would have flattered Cyrano de Bergerac He shuffled forward slowly until it was his turn to climb into a taxi The operation was a slow one, and the driver was already drumming his fingers against the wheel when his passenger told him in guttural tones that he wanted to be taken to the bankers, Daumier et Cie The driver moved off without asking for further directions. Swiss taxi-drivers know the way to the banks in the same way as London cabbies can always find a theatre and New York's yellow cabs a westside bar

When the old man arrived at his destination he took some time sorting out which coins to pay with He then pushed himself slowly out on to the pavement and stood gazing at the marble building. Its solidity made him feel safe He was about to touch the door when a man in a smart blue uniform opened it

"I have come to see –" he began in stilted German, but the doorman only pointed to the girl behind the reception desk. He shuffled over to her and then repeated, "I have come to see Herr Daumier. My name is Emmanuel Rosenbaum."

"Do you have an appointment?" she asked.

"I fear not."

"Herr Daumier is in conference at the moment," said the girl, "but I will find out if there is another partner available to see you." After a phone conversation in German she said, "Can you take the lift to the third floor?" Mr Rosenbaum nodded with obvious signs of reluctance, but did as he was bid. When he stepped out of the lift, only just before the door closed on him, another young woman was standing there ready to greet him. She asked him if he would be kind enough to wait in what he would have described as a cloakroom with two chairs. Some time passed before anyone came to see him, and the old man was unable to hide his surprise at the age of the boy who eventually appeared.

"I am Wolfherd Praeger," said the young man, "a partner of the bank."

"Sit down, sit down," said Mr Rosenbaum. "I cannot stare up at you for so long." The young partner complied.

"My name is Emmanuel Rosenbaum. I left a package with you in 1938, and I have returned to collect it."

"Yes, of course," said the junior partner, the tone of his voice changing. "Do you have any proof of your identity, or any documentation from the bank?"

"Oh, yes," came back the reply, and the old man handed over his passport and a receipt that had been folded and unfolded so many times it was now almost in pieces.

The young man studied both documents carefully. He recognised the Israeli passport immediately. Everything seemed to be in order. The bank's receipt, too, although issued in the year of his birth, appeared authentic.

"May I leave you for a moment, sir?"

"Of course," said the old man, "after twenty-eight years I think I can wait for a few more minutes."

Shortly after the young man had left the woman returned and invited Mr Rosenbaum to move to another room. This time it was larger and comfortably furnished. Within minutes the junior partner returned with another man, whom he introduced as Herr Daumier.

"I don't think we have ever met, Herr Rosenbaum," said the chairman courteously "You must have dealt with my father."

"No, no," said Mr Rosenbaum "I dealt with your grandfather, Helmut "

A look of respect came into Herr Daumier's eyes

"I saw your father only on the one occasion, and was sad to learn of his premature death," added Rosenbaum "He was always so considerate You do not wear a rose in your lapel as he did "

"No, sir, a tiny rebellion "

Rosenbaum tried to laugh but only coughed

"I wonder if you have any further proof of identity othe than your passport?" Herr Daumier asked politely

Emmanuel Rosenbaum raised his head and, giving Her Daumier a tired look, turned his wrist so that it faced upwards The number 712910 was tattooed along the inside

"I apologise," said Daumier, visibly embarrassed "It wil take me only a few minutes to bring your box up, if you wi be kind enough to wait "

Mr Rosenbaum's eyes blinked as if he were too tired eve to nod his agreement. The two men left him alone The returned a few minutes later with a flat box about two fe square and placed it on the table in the centre of the roon Herr Daumier unlocked the top lock while the other partne acted as a witness He then handed over a key to Rosenbau saying, "We will now leave you, sir Just press the butto underneath the table when you wish us to return "

"Thank you," said Rosenbaum, and waited for the door close behind them He turned the key in the lock and push up the lid Inside the box was a package in the shape of picture, about eighteen by twelve inches, covered in musl and tied securely Rosenbaum placed the package carefully his old suitcase. He then shut the box and locked it. He press the button under the table and within seconds Herr Daum and the junior partner returned

"I do hope everything was as you left it, Herr Rosenbaum said the chairman, "it has been some considerable time "

'Yes, thank you " This time the old gentleman did manage nod

"May I mention a matter of no great consequence?" asked Herr Daumier

"Pray do so," said the old man

"Is it your intention to continue with the use of the box? The funds you left to cover the cost have recently run out."

"No, I have no need for it any longer "

"It's just that there was a small charge outstanding But in the circumstances we are happy to waive it."

"You are most kind " Herr Daumier bowed and the junior partner accompanied their client to the front door, helped him into a taxi and instructed the driver to take Mr Rosenbaum to Zurich airport

At the airport, the old man took his time reaching th check-in desk, because he appeared to be frightened of th escalator, and with the suitcase now quite heavy the flight steps was difficult to negotiate

At the desk he produced his ticket for the girl to check a was pleased to find that the passenger lounge was alm empty He shuffled over towards the corner and collapsed to a comfortable sofa He checked to be sure he was ou sight of the other passengers in the lounge

He flicked back the little knobs on the old suitcase and springs rose reluctantly He pushed up the lid, pulled ou parcel and held it to his chest His fingers wrestled wit knots for some time before they became loose He then rem the muslin to check his prize Mr Rosenbaum stared do the masterpiece 'The Cornfields' by Van Gogh – whi had no way of knowing had been missing from the V National Gallery since 1938

Emmanuel Rosenbaum swore, which was out of cha He packed the picture safely up and returned it to hi He then shuffled over to the girl at the Swissair sales de asked her to book him on the first available flight to G With luck he could still reach Roget et Cie before they

• • •

The BEA Viscount landed at Geneva airport at eleven twenty-five local time that morning, a few minutes later than scheduled The stewardess advised passengers to put their watches forward one hour to Central European Time

"Perfect," said Adam "We shall be in Geneva well in time for lunch, a visit to the bank and then back to the airport for the five past five flight home "

"You're treating the whole thing like a military exercise," said Heidi, laughing

"All except the last part," said Adam

"The last part?" she queried

"Our celebration dinner "

"At the Chelsea Kitchen again, no doubt "

"Wrong," said Adam "I've booked a table for two at eight o'clock at the Coq d'Or just off Piccadilly "

"Counting your chickens before they're hatched, aren't we?" said Heidi

"Oh, very droll," said Adam.

"Droll? I do not understand "

"I'll explain it to you when we have that dinner tonight "

"I was hoping we wouldn't make it," said Heidi

"Why?" asked Adam

"All I have to look forward to tomorrow is the check-out counter at the German Food Centre "

"That's not as bad as a work-out with the sergeant major at ten," groaned Adam "And by ten past I shall be flat on my back regretting I ever left Geneva "

"That will teach you to knock him out," said Heidi "So perhaps we ought to stay put after all," she added, taking him by the arm Adam leant down and kissed her gently on the cheek as they stood in the gangway waiting to be let off the plane A light drizzle was falling out on the aircraft steps Adam unbuttoned his raincoat and attempted to shelter Heidi beneath it as they ran across the tarmac to the Immigration Hall

"Good thing I remembered this," he said

"Not so much a raincoat, more a tent," said Heidi

"It's my old army trenchcoat," he assured her, opening it

p again "It can hold maps, compasses, even an over
it"

"Adam, we're just going to be strolling around Gene
the middle of summer, not lost in the Black Forest i
middle of winter"

He laughed "I'll remember your sarcasm when
pours"

The airport bus that travelled to and from the city took only
twenty minutes to reach the centre of Geneva

The short journey took them through the outskirts of the
city until they reached the magnificent still lake nestled in the
hills The bus continued alongside the lake until it came to a
halt opposite the massive single-spouting fountain that shot
over four hundred feet into the air

"I'm beginning to feel like a day tripper," said Heidi, a
they stepped out of the bus, pleased to find the light rain h
stopped

Both of them were immediately struck by how clean the
was as they walked along the wide litter-free pavement
ran alongside the lake On the other side of the road
hotels, shops and banks seemed in equal preponderance

"First we must find out where our bank is so that we
have lunch nearby before going to pick up the booty"

"How does a military man go about such a demar
exercise?" asked Heidi

"Simple We drop in at the first bank we see and ask
to direct us to Roget et Cie"

"I'll bet your little arm must have been covered in in
badges when you were a Boy Scout"

Adam burst out laughing "Am I that bad?"

"Worse," said Heidi "But you personify every G
image of the perfect English gentleman" Adam
touched her hair gently and leaning down, kissed h
lips

Heidi was suddenly conscious of the stares fro
strangers "I don't think the Swiss approve of that s
in public," she said "In fact I'm told some of t
approve of it in private"

"Shall I go and kiss that old prune over there who is still
ring at us?" said Adam
"Don't do that, Adam, you might turn into a frog. No, let's
t your plan of campaign into action," she said, pointing to
Banque Populaire on the far side of the avenue
When they had crossed the road Heidi enquired of the
orman the way to Roget et Cie They followed his directions,
ce again admiring the great single-spouted fountain as they
ntinued on towards the centre of the city
Roget et Cie was not that easy to pinpoint, and they walked

nch
"What were you expecting – a small branch in the country?
know you English don't like to admit it but this is the centre
f the banking world "
"Let's find that restaurant before our entente cordiale breaks
down," said Adam They retraced their steps towards the

really exists," he said
When they had returned to the entrance of the bank Adam
pushed open the heavy door, took a step inside and stared
around the gloomy hall
"Over there," said Heidi, pointing to a woman who was
seated behind a desk
"Good morning My name is Adam Scott. I have come to
collect something that has been left to me in a will "
The woman smiled "Have you made an appointment with
anyone in particular?" she asked, with only the slightest trace
of accent
"No," said Adam. "I didn't realise that I had to."

"I'm sure it will be all right," said
a phone, dialled a single number and held a short co
in French Replacing the phone she asked them both to go
the fourth floor

As Adam walked out of the lift, he was surprised to be
by someone of his own age

"Good afternoon, my name is Pierre Neffe and I am
partner of the bank," said the young man in perfect English

"I did warn you that I would be redundant," whispered
Heidi

"Don't speak too soon," replied Adam "We haven't
begun to explain our problem yet"

M Neffe led them to a small, exquisitely furnished room

"I could settle down here," said Adam, taking off his coat
"without any trouble"

"We do like to make our customers feel at home," said M
Neffe condescendingly

"You obviously haven't seen my home," said Adam M
Neffe did not laugh

"How can I help you?" was all the young partner offered
by way of reply

"My father," began Adam, "died last month and left me
his will a receipt for something I think you have had in your
safe-keeping since 1938 It was a gift given to him by one of your
customers" Adam hesitated "A Mr Emmanuel Rosenbaum"

"Do you have any documentation relating to this gift"
enquired M Neffe

"Oh, yes," said Adam, digging into the map pocket of
trenchcoat He passed over the Roget et Cie receipt to
young banker M Neffe studied it and nodded "May I
permitted to see your passport, Mr Scott?"

"Certainly," said Adam, delving back into his trench
and passing it to M Neffe

"If you will excuse me for one moment" M Neffe rose
left them on their own

"What do you imagine they are up to now?" said Hei

"Checking first if they still have the icon, and second
receipt is authentic 1938 was rather a long time ago"

s the minutes ticked by, Adam started to feel disappointed, ı depressed, and finally began to believe it was all going urn out to be a complete waste of time

You could always take one of the pictures off the wall and ıt in your trenchcoat," teased Heidi "I'm sure it would h a good price in London. Perhaps even more than your oved icon "

'Too late," said Adam as M Neffe reappeared with another ıker whom he introduced as M Roget

'Good morning," said M Roget "I am sorry that my father ıot here to meet you, Mr Scott, but he has been held up in ıcago on business " He shook hands with both Adam and ıdı. "We have on file a letter from Mr Rosenbaum giving ar instructions to the bank that the box is not to be opened any other than" – he looked at the piece of paper he had ought with him – "Colonel Gerald Scott, DSO, OBE, C "

"My father," said Adam "But as I explained to M. Neffe,

ı his trenchcoat before removing a large brown envelope with ıe words 'Holbrooke, Holbrooke and Gascoigne' printed in eavy black letters across the top He took out copies of his ather's death certificate, the will and a letter marked 'To Vhom It May Concern' and passed them to M. Roget, who ead all three documents slowly, then handed them to his enior partner, who after he had read them whispered in his hairman's ear

"Would you object to us phoning Mr Holbrooke in your ɔresence?" asked M Roget

"No," said Adam simply. "But I must warn you that he is

a minute later with a copy of the Eng

1966

Adam was impressed by the bank's thoroughness a

Roget checked that the number and address on the letter

corresponded with the number and address in the Year B

"I don't think it will be necessary to call Mr Holbrooke,"

M Roget, "but we have encountered one small problem

Scott"

"And what is that?" asked Adam, nervously

"Mr Rosenbaum's position is somewhat overdrawn,"

the bank's rule is that an account must be cleared before

box can be opened"

Adam's pulse raced as he assumed that he hadn't

enough money to cover this eventuality

"The account is only 120 francs in debit," continue

Roget, "which is the charge for housing the box over the

two years since Mr Rosenbaum's deposit ran out"

Adam breathed a sigh of relief He took out his wallet

signed a traveller's cheque and handed it over

"And finally," said M Roget, "we will need you to

form of indemnity for the bank"

M Roget passed over a long form containing claus

clause in tightly printed French at which Adam only

before passing it over to Heidi She studied each claus

fully M Roget used the time to explain to Adam tha

a standard disclaimer clearing the bank of any habil

cerning what might be in the box and Adam's legal ch

Heidi looked up and nodded her agreement

Adam signed on the dotted line with a flourish

"Excellent," said the banker "All we have to do

and retrieve your box"

"I suppose it could be empty," said Adam once t

them were left alone again

"And it could be jam-packed with gold doubloon

pessimist," said Heidi

When both men returned a few minutes later, M

—ing a flat metal box about twelve by nine in

— deep

m was disappointed by its modest size, but didn't show
lings M Roget proceeded to undo the top lock with the
key and then handed Adam a small faded envelope
ignatures scrawled across the waxed seal "Whatever is
box belongs to you, Mr Scott. When you have finished,
os you would be kind enough to let us know Until then
." [illegible] dor "

[illegible] t wait." Adam opened the
[illegible] nbled with the lock which
d and then he pushed up the lid Inside the box was a
flat package wrapped in muslin and tied tightly with
; The knots took some undoing and then finally an
[illegible]

speechless Neither of them had expected the icon to be
eathtaking St George towering over the dragon, a massive
d in hand on the point of plunging it into the heart of the
t. The fire that belched from the dragon's jaw was a deep
und made a startling contrast to the gold cloak that seemed
ivelop the saint.
It's magnificent," said Heidi, eventually finding her
e.
dam continued to hold the tiny painting in his hand
Say something," said Heidi
I wish my father had seen it, perhaps it would have changed
whole life "
Don't forget he wanted it to change yours," said Heidi.
dam finally turned the icon over and found on the back a
all silver crown inlaid in the wood He stared at it, trying
ecall what Mr Sedgwick of Sotheby's had said that proved.
I wish my father had opened the letter," said Adam,
ning the icon back over and once again admiring St George's
umph "Because it was his by right "
Heidi checked there was nothing else left inside the box. She
en flicked down the lid and Adam locked it again with his
y. He tucked the muslin round the masterpiece, tied it up

firmly and zipped the little painting into the
trenchcoat

Heidi smiled "I knew you'd be able to prove that
needed that coat even if it didn't rain"

Adam walked over to the door and opened it. The
bankers immediately returned

"I hope you found what you had been promised," said
Roget

"Yes, indeed," said Adam "But I shall have no furth
need of the box," he added, returning the key

"As you wish," said M Roget, bowing, "and here is
change from your traveller's cheque, sir," he said, passing
some Swiss notes to Adam "If you will excuse me I will
take my leave of you Monsieur Neffe will show you out"
shook hands with Adam, bowed slightly to Heidi and add
with a faint smile, "I do hope you didn't find us too cur-
-geonly" They both laughed

"I also hope that you will enjoy a pleasant stay in our city
said M Neffe as the lift took its leisurely pace down

"It will have to be very quick," said Adam "We have
be back at the airport in just over an hour"

The lift stopped at the ground floor and M Neffe
companied Adam and Heidi across the hall The door
held open for them but they both stood aside to allow a
man to shuffle past Although most people would have
at his nose Adam was more struck by his penetrating e

When the old man eventually reached the woman
reception desk, he announced, "I have come to see M
Roget"

"I'm afraid he's in Chicago at the moment, sir, but I'
if his son is available What name shall I tell him?"

"Emmanuel Rosenbaum" The woman picked up the p
and held another conversation in French When she
replaced it she asked, "Would you go to the fourth floo
Rosenbaum?"

Once again he had to take the fearsome lift, and once
he only just got out before its gr back o
Another middle-aged woman ac

om He politely declined her offer of coffee, thumping his art with his right hand

"Monsieur Roget will be with you shortly," she reassured e old gentleman

He did not have to wait long before a smiling M Roget ppeared

"How nice to make your acquaintance, Monsieur Rosenaum, but I'm afraid you have just missed Mr Scott."

"Mr Scott?" the old man uttered in surprise

"Yes He left only a few minutes ago, but we carried out the nstructions as per your letter "

"My letter?" said Mr Rosenbaum

"Yes," said the banker, opening for the second time that norning a file which had remained untouched for over twenty ears

He handed a letter to the old man

Emmanuel Rosenbaum removed a pair of glasses from his nside pocket, unfolded them slowly and proceeded to read a hand that he recognised It was a bold script written in thick black ink

Forsthaus Haarhot
Amsberg 14
Vosswinnel
Sachsen
Germany
September 12, 1945

Dear M Roget,

I have left in your safe-keeping a small icon of St George and the Dragon in my box 718 I am transferring the ownership of that painting to a British army officer, Colonel Gerald Scott, DSO, OBE, MC If Colonel Scott should come to claim the icon at any time please ensure that he *receives my key without delay*

My thanks to you for your help in this matter, and I am we have never met in person

Yours sincerely,
Emmanuel Rosenbaum

'And you say that Colonel Scott came to collect
of the box earlier today?"

'No, no, Monsieur Rosenbaum The colonel
recently and left the contents of the box to his son,
Monsieur Nelle and I checked all the documents
death certificate and the will, and we were left
that they were both authentic and that every
order He was also in possession of your receipt
banker hesitated "I do hope we did the right thing, ...
Rosenbaum?"

"You certainly did," said the old man "I came only
check that my wishes had been carried out "

M Roget smiled in relief "I feel I ought also to mention
that your account had run into a small deficit "

"How much do I owe you?" asked the old man, fumbli
in his breast pocket

"Nothing," said M Roget "Nothing at all Monsieur So
dealt with it "

"I am in debt to Mr Scott Are you able to tell me
amount?"

"One hundred and twenty francs," said M Roget

"Then I must repay the sum immediately," said the
man "Do you by any chance have an address at which I
contact him?"

"No, I'm sorry I am unable to help you there," sai
Roget "I have no idea where he is staying in Geneva
hand touched M Roget's elbow, and M Nelle bent dow

[illegible] Scott was pla

'I ne[illegible]
gentlemen, and I will not ta[illegible]

"It's flight BE 171 and your seats are 14A an
behind the check-in counter told them "The
so you should be boarding at gate Number
twenty minutes "

"Thank you," said Adam.

"Do you have any luggage that needs checking in?"

"No," said Adam "We only spent the day in Geneva "

"Then have a good flight, sir," said the man, handing over their boarding passes Adam and Heidi started walking towards the escalator that would take them to the departure lounge

"I have seven hundred and seventy Swiss francs left," said Adam, thumbing through some notes, "and while we're here I must get my mother a box of decent liqueur chocolates When I was a boy I used to give her a minute box every Christmas I swore when I grew up if I ever got to Switzerland I would find her the finest box available " Heidi pointed to a counter that displayed row upon row of ornate boxes Adam walked over and selected a large, gold-wrapped box of Lindt chocolates which the girl behind the counter gift-wrapped and placed in a carrier bag

"Why are you frowning?" asked Adam after collecting his change

"She's just reminded me that I have to be back behind a till tomorrow morning," said Heidi

"Well, at least we've got the Coq d'Or to look forward to tonight," said Adam He checked his watch "Not much else we can do now except perhaps pick up some wine in the duty free "

"I'd like to find a copy of *Der Spiegel* before we go through customs "

"Fine," said Adam "Why don't we try the paper shop over in the corner "

"A call for Mr Adam Scott Will Adam Scott please return to the BEA desk on the ground floor," came booming out over the public address system

Adam and Heidi stared at each other "Must have given us the wrong seat allocation, I suppose," said Adam, shrugging "Let's go back and find out."

They returned downstairs and walked over to the man who handed them their boarding passes "I think you put [illegible] for [illegible]," said Adam "My name is Scott."

"Oh, yes," said the man. "There's an urgent messa you," he said, reading from a pad in front of him "Pleas Monsieur Roget at Roget et Cie on Geneva 271279" Her off the piece of paper and handed it over. "The phone over there in the far corner behind the KLM desk, and need twenty centimes"

"Thank you," said Adam, studying the message, but it no clue as to why M Roget should need to speak to him

"I wonder what he can want," said Heidi "It's a bi to ask for the icon back"

"Well, there's only one way I'm going to find out," Adam [illegible] that anc

[illegible]

the brightly coloured bag which contained the chocolates

"Right," said Adam "Meet you here in a couple of nutes"

"Roget et Cie Est-ce-que je peux vous aider?"

"I am returning Monsieur Roget's call," said Adam, mak no attempt to answer in French

"Yes, sir Whom shall I say is calling?" asked the telephc ist, immediately switching to English.

"Adam Scott"

"I'll find out if he's available, sir"

[illegible]

But now that you have rung, it might interest you to know that just as you were leaving Mr Emmanuel Rosenbaum paid us a visit"

"Emmanuel Rosenbaum?" said Adam, "but I assumed he was "

[illegible]

had taken for granted that she spoke English but decided it must be the only language he felt confident conversing in

"I am trying to find a taxi and I am already late, but I fear my eyesight is not what it used to be"

Heidi replaced the copy of *Der Spiegel* on the shelf and said, "They're just through the double doors in the centre Let me show you"

"How kind," he said "But I do hope I am not putting you to too much trouble"

"Not at all," said Heidi, taking the old man by the arm and guiding him back towards the door marked 'Taxi et Autobus'

"Are you sure it was Rosenbaum?" said Adam anxiously

"I'm certain," replied the banker

"And he seemed happy about me keeping the icon?"

"Oh, yes That was not the problem His only concern was to return your 120 francs I think he may try and get in touch with you"

"BEA announce the departure of their flight BE 171 to London Heathrow from gate Number Nine"

"I must leave," said Adam "My plane takes off in a few minutes"

"Have a good flight," said the banker

"Thank you, Monsieur Roget," said Adam and replaced the receiver. He turned towards the BEA counter and was surprised to find that Heidi had not yet returned His eyes began to search the ground floor for a paper shop as he feared she might well not have heard the departure announcement

Then he spotted her walking out through the double door, helping the old man he had noticed earlier

Adam called out and quickened his pace Something didn't feel quite right When he reached the automatic door he had to check his stride to allow it to slide back He could now see Heidi standing on the pavement in front of him, opening a taxi door for the old man

"Heidi," he shouted The old gentleman suddenly turned and once again Adam found himself staring at the man he could have sworn he had seen at the bank "Mr Rosenbaum?" he questioned Then with a movement of his arm that was so fast and powerful it took Adam by surprise, the old man threw Heidi into the back of the taxi, jumped in beside her, and pulling the taxi door closed, hollered at the top of his voice, "*Allez vite*"

For a moment Adam was stunned but then he dashed to the side of the taxi and only just managed to touch the handle as it accelerated away from the kerb The car's sudden momentum knocked Adam backwards on the pavement, but not before he saw the petrified look on Heidi's face He stared at the number plate of the departing car B-7-1-2 – was all he could catch, but at least he recognised it was a blue Mercedes Desperately he looked around for another taxi but the only one in sight was already being filled up with luggage

A Volkswagen Beetle drew up on the far side of the concourse A woman stepped out of the driver's seat and walked to the front to open the boot A man joined her from the passenger's sideand lifted out a suitcase, before she slammed the boot lid back into place

On the kerb, the two of them embraced As they did so, Adam sprinted across the road and opening the passenger door of the Volkswagen, leapt inside and slid into the driver's seat The key was still in the ignition He turned it on, threw the car into gear, slammed his foot on the accelerator and shot backwards The embracing couple stared at him in disbelief Adam jerked the gear lever out of reverse into what he hoped was first. The engine turned over slowly, but just fast enough for him to escape the pursuing man It must be third, he

thought, and changed down as he began to follow the signs to the centre of Geneva

By the time he reached the first roundabout he had mastered the gears, but had to concentrate hard on remaining on the right hand side of the road "B712 B712," he repeated to himself again and again, to be sure it was fixed in his memory He checked the number plate and the passengers of every blue taxi he passed After a dozen or so, he began to wonder if Heidi's taxi might have left the motorway for a minor road He pressed the accelerator even harder – 90, 100, 110, 120 kilometres an hour He passed three more taxis but there was still no sign of Heidi

Then he saw a Mercedes in the outside lane some considerable distance ahead of him, its lights full on and travelling well above the speed limit He felt confident that the Volkswagen was powerful enough to catch the Mercedes especially if it had a diesel engine Metre by metre he began to narrow the gap as he tried to fathom out why the old man would want to kidnap Heidi in the first place Could it be Rosenbaum? But he had wanted him to keep the icon, or so the banker had assured him None of it made sense, and he drove on wondering if at any moment he was going to wake up

When they reached the outskirts of the city Adam hadn't woken up as he followed carefully the taxi's chosen route By the next roundabout only three cars divided them "A red [illegible]

leaped out of the car and started running towards the taxi, but the light changed back to green just before he could reach it and the Mercedes sped away Adam sprinted back to the Volkswagen and only just managed to drive the car across the junction as the light turned red His decision to get out of the car had lost him several crucial seconds and when he looked anxiously ahead he could only just spot the taxi in the distance

When they reached the Avenue de France, running parallel with the west side of the lake, both cars weaved in and out of

the traffic, until the Mercedes suddenly turned left and climbed up a slight hill. Adam threw his steering wheel over to follow it, and for several yards careered up the wrong side of the road, narrowly missing a post van meandering down towards him. He watched carefully as the taxi turned left again, and in order to keep in contact he veered in front of a bus so sharply that it was forced to slam on its brakes. Several passengers, thrown from their seats, waved their fists at him as the bus's horn blared.

The taxi was now only a couple of hundred yards ahead. Once again Adam began to pick up some ground when suddenly it swerved into the kerbside and screeched to a halt. Nothing seemed to happen for the next few seconds as Adam weaved his way towards the stationary taxi, skidding to a halt directly behind the Mercedes. He then leaped out of the car and ran towards the parked vehicle. But, without warning, the old man jumped out of the taxi on the far side of the car and sprinted off up a side-street carrying with him Heidi's airport shopping bag and a small suitcase.

Adam pulled the back door open and stared at the beautiful girl who sat motionless. "Are you all right, are you all right?" he shouted, suddenly realising how much she meant to him. Heidi did not move a muscle and made no reply. Adam put his arms on her shoulders and looked into her eyes but they showed no response. He began to stroke her hair and then without warning her head fell limply on to his shoulder like a [illegible] from the [illegible] obviously not old at all, but young and [illegible]. Suddenly Adam's fear turned to anger. He had a split second to make [illegible] of Heidi jumped out of the car and started

to sprint up the hill after her killer Two or three onlookers had already gathered on the kerbside and were now staring at Adam and the two cars. He had to catch the man who was still running Adam moved as fast as he could but the trencheoat he was wearing slowed him down, and by the time he too had reached the top of the hill the killer was a clear hundred yards ahead of him, weaving his way through the main thoroughfare. Adam tried to lengthen his stride as he watched the man leap on to a passing tram, but he was too far behind to make any impression on him and could only watch the tram moving inexorably into the distance

The man stood on the tram steps and stared back at Adam He held up the shopping bag defiantly with one hand The back was no longer hunched, the figure no longer frail, and even at that distance, Adam could sense the triumph in the man's stance Adam stood for several seconds in the middle of the road helplessly watching the tram as it disappeared out of sight.

He tried to gather his thoughts He realised that there was little hope of picking up a taxi during the rush hour Behind him he could hear sirens of what he presumed were ambulances trying to rush to the scene of the accident "Accident," said Adam "They will soon discover it was murder " He tried to start sorting out in his mind the madness of the last half hour None of it made sense. He would surely find it was all a mistake

. Then he touched the side of his coat, touched the package that held the Tsar's icon. The killer hadn't gone to all that trouble for £20,000 – murdering two innocent people who happened to have got in his way – why, why, *why*, was the icon that important? What had the Sotheby's expert said? "A Russian gentleman had enquired after the piece " Adam's mind began to whirl. If it was Emmanuel Rosenbaum and that was what he had killed for, all he had ended up with was a large box of Swiss liqueur chocolates

When Adam heard the whistle behind him he felt relieved that help was at hand but as he turned he saw two officers with guns out of their holsters pointing towards him He instinctively turned his jog into a run, and looking over his

shoulder he saw that several police were now giving chase. He lengthened his stride again and, despite the trenchcoat, doubted if there were a member of the Swiss force who could hope to keep up the pace he set for more than a quarter of a mile. He turned into the first alley he came to and speeded up. It was narrow – not wide enough for even two bicycles to pass. Once he was beyond the alley he selected a one-way street. It was crammed with cars, and he was able swiftly and safely to move in and out of the slow-moving oncoming traffic.

In a matter of minutes he had lost the pursuing police, but he still ran on, continually switching direction until he felt he had covered at least two miles. He finally turned into a quiet street and halfway down saw a fluorescent sign advertising the Hotel Monarche. It didn't look much more than a guest house, and certainly wouldn't have qualified under the description of an hotel. He stopped in the shadows and waited, taking in great gulps of air. After about three minutes his breathing was back to normal and he marched straight into the hotel.

HAPTER ELEVEN

stood naked, staring at the image of Emmanuel Rosenbaum the hotel mirror. He didn't like what he saw. First he moved the teeth, then began to click his own up and down: had been warned that the gums would ache for days. Then instakingly he shed each layer of his bulbous nose, admiring e skill and artistry that had gone into creating such a onstrosity. It will be too conspicuous, he had told them. hey will remember nothing else, had come back the experts' ply.

When the last layer had been removed, the aristocratic one at took its place looked ridiculous in the centre of such a ce. Next he began on the lined forehead that even moved hen he frowned. As the lines disappeared, so the years eeded Next the flaccid red cheeks, and finally, the two chins. The Swiss bankers would have been amazed at how easily the harp rubbing of a pumice stone removed the indelible number n the inside of his arm Once more he studied himself in the nirror *The hair, short and greying, would take nature longer.* When they had cut his hair and smeared that thick, mud-like concoction all over his scalp he realised how an Irishman must feel to be tarred and feathered. Moments later he stood under a warm shower, his fingers massaging deep into the roots of his hair. Black treacly water started to run down his face and body before finally disappearing down the plug hole. It took half a bottle of shampoo before his hair had returned to its normal colour, but he realised that it would take considerably longer before he stopped looking like a staff sergeant in the United States Marines.

In a corner of the room lay the long baggy coat, the shiny

shapeless suit, the black tie, the off-white shirt, woollen socks and the Israeli passport Hours of preparation discarded in matter of minutes He longed to burn them all, but instead left them in a heap. He returned to the main room and stretched himself out on the bed like a yawning cat. His back still ached from all the bending and crouching He stood up then touched his toes and threw his arms high above his head fifty times He rested for one minute before completing fifty press-ups

He returned to the bathroom and had a second shower – cold. He was beginning to feel like a human being again He then changed into a freshly ironed cream silk shirt and a new double-breasted suit.

Before making one phone call to London and two more to Moscow he ordered dinner in his room so that no one would see him – he had no desire to explain how the man who checked in was thirty years younger than the man eating alone in his room Like a hungry animal he tore at the steak and gulped the wine

He [illegible] no desire to [illegible]

His eyes then rested on the little leather suitcase that lay the floor by the side of his bed He opened it and took out copy of the icon that Zaborski had ordered he should alw have with him so that there could be no doubt when he ca across the original of St George and the Dragon

At a little after eleven he switched on the late-night ne They had no photograph of the suspect, only one of that stu taxi-driver who had driven so slowly it had cost the fool life, and the pretty German girl who had tried to fight ba It had been pathetic, one firm clean strike and her ne was broken The television announcer said the police we searching for an unnamed Englishman Romanov smiled the thought of police searching for Scott while he was eatin steak in a luxury hotel Although the Swiss police had r

way to the phone box. He pressed a twenty centime coin
the box and waited A voice said, "*Est-ce que je peux vous ai*
Adam uttered only one word, "*International*." A moment
another voice asked the same question.

"I want to make a reverse charge call to London," s
Adam firmly He had no desire to repeat himself

"Yes," said the voice. "And what is your name?"

"George Cromer," replied Adam.

"And the number you are speaking from?"

"Geneva 271982" He reversed the last three digits b
the police could well be listening in on all calls to Engl
that night He then told the girl the number in London
required.

"Can you wait for a moment, please?"

"Yes," said Adam as his eyes checked up and down
street once again, still looking for any unfamiliar movement
Only the occasional early morning car sped by He
absolutely motionless in the corner of the box

He could hear the connection being put through. "p
wake up," his lips mouthed At last the ringing stopped
Adam recognised the familiar voice which answered

"Who is this?" Lawrence asked, sounding irritated b
perfectly awake

"Will you accept a reverse charge call from a Mr
Cromer in Geneva?"

"George Cromer, Lord Cromer, the Governor of the Ba
of Eng –? Yes, I will," he said

"It's me, Lawrence," said Adam

"Thank God Where are you?"

"I'm still in Geneva but I'm not sure you're going to bel
what I'm about to tell you While we were waiting to boa
our plane home a man pulled Heidi into a taxi and la
murdered her before I could catch up with them And
trouble is that the Swiss police think I'm the killer"

"Now just relax, Adam I know that much It's been on
evening news and the police have already been around
interview me It seems

asleep, the television screen still faintly [illegible]
dot in place Adam was back on his bed by five minutes p
four He didn't sleep Rosenbaum, Heidi, the taxi driver, t
Russian gentleman at Sotheby's So many pieces of a jigs
none of them fitting into place.

But the one thing that worried him most was the con
sation with Lawrence – the Lawrence of old?

[illegible] at two
[illegible] iscon
[illegible] ee bo

on the west side of the city, on each occasion with no succ
They had checked over a thousand registration cards
woken seven innocent Englishmen who had not come
where near fitting the description of Adam Scott

At eight they would be off duty and could go home to t
wives and breakfasts, but they still had three more hotel
check before then When the landlady saw them coming i
the hall she waddled as quickly as possible from the m
office towards them She loathed the police and was willing
believe anyone who told her that the Swiss pigs were e
worse than the Germans Twice in the last year she had b
fined and once even threatened with jail over her failure
register every guest If they caught her once more she kn
they would take her licence away and with it her living fi
slow mind tried to recall who had booked in the previo
evening Eight people had registered but only two had p
cash – the Englishman who hardly opened his mouth, M
Pemberton was the name he had filled in on the missing car
and Maurice who always turned up with a different g
whenever he was in Geneva She had destroyed both the
cards and pocketed the money Maurice and the girl had l
by seven and she had already made up their bed, but t
Englishman was still asleep in his room

"We need to check your registration cards for last nigh
madame"

"Certainly, monsieur," she replied with a warm smile, an

every direction. He had watched the early morning commuters flooding in on every train. By twenty past eight Adam judged they were at their peak. He checked that the scen was as planned and left his hideout to join the flood as they headed to work. He stopped at the kiosk to purchase a newspaper. The only English paper on sale at that time in the morning was the *Herald-Tribune*; the London papers didn't arrive until the first plane could land, but Adam had seen the *Herald-Tribune* come in on the train from Paris. He made two other purchases [illegible] the gourcing crowds [illegible]

tretched his legs and walked over to a confessional box partly idden behind a pillar A small sign on the wooden support howed that the box was not in use Adam slipped in, sat down and pulled the curtain closed.

First he took out the *Herald-Tribune* from his trenchcoat pocket, and then the bar of chocolate He tore the silver paper from the chocolate and began to munch greedily Next he searched for the story Only one or two items of English news were on the front page, as most of the articles were devoted to what was happening in America. "The pound still too high at $2.80?" one headline suggested Adam's eyes passed over the smaller headlines until he saw the paragraph he was looking for. It was in the bottom left-hand corner "Englishman sought after German girl and Swiss taxi-driver murdered" Adam read the story, and only began to tremble when he discovered they knew his name

"Captain Adam Scott, who recently resigned his commission from the Royal Wessex Regiment, is wanted please turn to page fifteen" Adam began to turn the large pages It was not easy in the restricted space of a confessional box. " . for questioning by the Geneva police in connection with "

"*Au nom du Père, du Fils et du Saint Esprit*"

Adam looked up from the paper startled and considered making a dash for it But he allowed his long-ago training to take hold as he found himself saying automatically, "Father, bless me, for I have sinned and wish to confess"

"Good, my son, and what form has this sin taken?" asked the priest in accented but clear English

Adam thought quickly, I must give him no clue as to who I am He looked out through the gap in the curtain and was alarmed to see two policemen questioning another priest by the west door. He drew the curtains tight and turned to the only accent he could ever imitate with any conviction

"I'm over from Dublin, Father, and last night I picked up this local girl in a bar and took her back to my hotel"

"Yes, my son."

"Well, one thing led to another, Father"

"Another what, my son?"

"Well I took her up to my room."
"Yes, my son."
"And she started to undress."
"And then what happened?"
"She started to undress me."
"But you try to resist, my son?"
"Yes, Father, but it got harder."
"And did intercourse take place?" asked the priest.
"I'm afraid so, Father. I couldn't stop myself. She was so beautiful," Adam added.
"And is it your intention to marry this girl, my son?"
"Oh, no, Father, I'm already married and have two lovely children, Seamus and Maureen."
"It is a night you must for ever put behind you."
"I'd like to, Father."
"Has this happened before?"
"No, Father, it's the first time I've been abroad on my business. I swear to it."
"Then let it be a lesson to you, my son, and may the Lord find it in his mercy to forgive you this abominable sin and you must make your act of contrition."
"Oh my God..."
When Adam had completed the act of contrition the priest pronounced absolution and told him he must as penance say three decades of the Rosary.
"And one more thing..."
"Yes, Father?"
"You will tell your wife everything the moment you return to Ireland or you cannot hope for atonement. You must promise me that, my son."
"When I see my wife, I will tell her everything that happened last night, Father," Adam promised, as he once again checked through the curtains. The police were no longer anywhere to be seen.
"Good, and continue to pray to our Blessed Lady to keep you from the evils of temptation."
Adam folded up his paper, pushed it in the trenchcoat and bolted from the little box and took a seat on the end of a pew.

He lowered his head and began to whisper the Lord's Prayer as he opened the map of Geneva and began to study the road plan He had located the British Consulate on the far side of a large garden square by the time he reached 'Deliver us from evil.' He estimated that it was just over a mile away from the cathedral, but seven streets and a bridge had to be negotiated before he would be safe He returned to the Lady Chapel and his knees Adam checked his watch It was too early to leave St Peter's so he remained head in hands for another thirty minutes, going over the route again and again He watched a party of tourists as they were conducted through the cathedral His eyes never left them as they began to move nearer and nearer to the great door at the west end of the aisle He needed to time it to perfection

Suddenly Adam rose and walked quickly down the side aisle reaching the porch only a yard behind the party of tourists They shielded him out on to the square Adam ducked under a shop awning at the side of the road, then walked round three sides of the square to avoid the one policeman on duty by the north corner He crossed the first road as the light turned red and headed up a one-way street He kept on the inside of the pavement, knowing he had to turn left at the end of the road Two uniformed policemen came round the corner and walked [illegible]

[illegible]

[illegible] looking for a present for my wife "

The girl smiled "Perhaps a slip?" she suggested

"Yes," said Adam, "definitely a slip Do you have one in burgundy?" he asked, as he half turned to watch the policemen stroll past.

"Yes, I think so, but I'll have to check in the stockroom."

Adam had reached the next street corner long before she had returned with 'just the thing'

He managed the next three crossings without incident and

tramlines as he stared at the tree he had selected to shield him if the policeman turned before he could reach the front door He took a confident pace towards the British Consulate A tall man of athletic build, his head covered in a stubble of short fair hair, stepped out to greet him.

Adam would not have recognised him but for the eyes

PART TWO

0 DOWNING STREET
LONDON SW1

June 17, 1966

CHAPTER TWELVE

10 DOWNING STREET, LONDON SW1 *June 17, 1966*

When Sir Morris Youngfield left the Prime Minister he still was unable to work out why the possession of any icon could be that important

Leaving Number 10 behind him, Sir Morris marched quickly into the Foreign Office courtyard and within moments was stepping out of the lift on the seventh floor When he walked into his office, Tessa, his secretary, was laying out some papers for him

"I want a D4 assembled immediately," he said to the woman who had served him so loyally for fourteen years "And ask Commander Busch to join the team "

Tessa raised her eyebrows but Sir Morris ignored her silent comment as he knew he couldn't hope to get to the bottom of this one without the co-operation of the Americans Once more Sir Morris considered the Prime Minister's instructions. Harold Wilson hadn't needed to explain that he didn't get that many transatlantic calls from Lyndon Johnson seeking his help

But why a Russian icon of an English saint?

As Romanov moved towards him, Adam took a pace backwards from the tramlines to allow the tramcar to pass between them When the tram had passed Adam was no longer to be seen Romanov snarled at such an amateur trick, sprinted the twenty yards necessary to catch up with the tram and to the

the dark It was the first performance of the day and the inema was nearly empty Adam chose a seat on the end of a ow that was an equal distance from both exits

He stared at the screen, thankful that the movie had just egun, because he needed some time to formulate a plan

[illegible]

order into France was only eight miles away at Ferney-Voltaire. From there he could travel to Paris via Dijon and be back home almost as quickly as it would take him to sit through *Exodus* a second time Having decided on his route, the next problem for Adam was how to travel He dismissed all forms of public transport and settled on hiring a car He remained in his seat during the interval to double-check the routes The moment Paul Newman reappeared on the screen, he folded up the map and left the cinema by the exit which had been least used during the past four hours

When Sir Morris entered the room for the meeting of the 'Northern Department', he found the rest of the D4 were already assembled, and familiarising themselves with the files that had been presented to them only an hour before

He glanced round the table at the specially selected D4, all hand-picked men but only one of them did he consider his equal And it wasn't the old war-horse Alec Snell who had served at the Foreign Office longer than any of them and was touching his moustache nervously as he waited for Sir Morris to take his seat N

the Department

rich from –" Sir Morris couldn't resist a short dramatic
: "– Moscow I think it is not unreasonable therefore to
ne that Mr Rosenbaum, whoever he is, works directly or
ectly for the KGB
he KGB, as we know to our cost, is well serviced in
va, by a large number of East Europeans working under
guise of the United Nations for ILO and WHO, all
the necessary diplomatic status they need to carry out
rcover work What still remains a mystery to me is why
Rosenbaum should be willing to kill two innocent people

awrence Pemberton looked up from his end of the table

Did we have any idea of the contents of Goering's letter?"
ed Sir Morris.
'The whole letter, no, sir But one of our examination
rants, a Mr Nicholas Wainwright, was asked by Scott to
nslate what we now believe was a paragraph from the letter
cause later Wainwright asked the examination board if it
a part of his test " Lawrence extracted a piece of paper from
: file in front of him and read out the paragraph

During the year you cannot have failed to notice that I
have been receiving from one of the guards a regular supply
of Havana cigars – one of the few pleasures I have been
permitted, despite my incarceration The cigars themselves
have also served another purpose, as each one contained a
capsule with a small amount of poison Enough to allow me

to survive my trial, while
executioner.

"That's all?" said Sir Morris

"I'm afraid so," said Lawrence, "although I believe
confirms what Scott told me last night was his reason
travelling to Geneva There is no doubt in my mind that
package he went to pick up contained the icon of St Geo
and the Dragon left to his father by Goering"

"St George and the Dragon," said Matthews interrupted
"but that's the icon that half of the KGB have been searchi
for during the past two weeks and my Department has be
trying to find out why"

"And what have you come up with?" asked Sir Morris

"Very little," admitted Matthews "But we began to assume
that it must be a decoy because the Tsar's icon of St Georg
and the Dragon hangs in the Winter Palace at Leningrad an
has done so for three hundred years"

"Anything else?" asked Sir Morris

"Only that the section leader in search of the icon is Al
Romanov," said Matthews

Snell gave out a low whistle "Well, at least we know we're
dealing with the First Division," he said

There was a long silence before Sir Morris offered, "O
thing is clear We have to get to Scott first and must assum
that it's Romanov we're up against So what are we do
about it?"

"As much as we can get away with," said Lawrence "Al
with the Americans we have seventeen men operatives
Geneva, all of them trying to find Scott"

"The Swiss police have a thousand doing the same
though heaven knows whose side they imagine they're
added Snell

Lawrence chipped back in "And it's been almost impos
to convince them that Scott is not in any way responsib
the two murders So we may have to get him out wi
relying on their co-operation"

"But what do you imagine would be the outcome if Rom

this Rosenbaum, who must also be part of the KGB, anages to get to Scott before we do?" asked Matthews.

"A civilian up against one of the Russians' most ruthless ents That's all we need," said Commander Busch

Lawrence inclined his head towards the American "I've

I would have said no before Rosenbaum murdered his irlfriend," said Lawrence

"I wouldn't be confident of his chances even then," said Busch.

"Neither would I," added Matthews.

"That's because you don't know Adam Scott," said Lawrence

Matthews lowered his eyes in order to avoid a clash with his boss His boss. Ten years his junior A shortlist of two and hey had chosen another Oxbridge man to be Under-Secretary. Matthews knew that as far as the Foreign Office was concerned, he had gone to the wrong school and the wrong university. He should have taken his father's advice and joined the police force There were no class barriers there, and he would probably have been a chief superintendent by now

"Is he aware that you work for the Service?" asked Snell, putting a hand through his dark hair

"No. He, like my dear mother, still thinks I'm a bank official in the International Department of Barclays DCO But it won't be long before he works out that that's only a front [illegible]

"Do we have anything else to go on?" Sir Morris asked, [illegible]

within twenty-four hours Because of that I have requested overnight facilities to be set up in the building should you feel we need them When you return after dinner you will find beds already made up in your offices "

"No one will be going out to dinner tonight," said Sir Morris. [illegible]

The cinema door opened on to the busy pavement and Adam slipped into the main stream of commuters who were now returning home [illegible]

Adam, unable to hear the words, switched into a side road

again he was relieved to find there was no one standing in the corridor He made his way quickly along the passage to room 612

As he turned the key and opened the door he said firmly in as good a French accent as he could manage, "Room service", but as no one responded, he stepped in and locked the door behind him An unopened suitcase had been left in one corner Adam checked the label Obviously Mr Beresford hadn't even had time to unpack Adam checked the room, but there was no other sign of the hotel guest apart from a piece of paper on the side table It was a typed itinerary

'European Tour' Geneva, Frankfurt, Berlin, Amsterdam, London

'Geneva, Bus 5 00 to Concert Hall rehearsal 6 00, Concert performance 7 30, encores 10 00

'Programme Mozart's Horn Concerto, First Movement, Brahms's Second Symphony, Schubert's Unfinished Symphony '

Adam looked at his watch by the time Robin Beresford had completed the 'Unfinished Symphony' he would be over the border; but he still felt safe to remain in Room 612 until it was dark

He picked up the phone by the bed and dialled room service "Beresford, 612," he announced, and ordered himself some dinner before going into the bathroom On the side of the basin was propped a little plastic bag with the words 'Compliments of [illegible]

[illegible]

Beresford' and added a fifteen per cent tip

"Thank you," said the waiter and left As soon as the door closed behind him Adam's eyes settled on the feast of onion

soup, rump steak with green beans and potatoes, and finally a raspberry sorbet A bottle of house wine had been uncorked and needed only [illegible] poured He suddenly didn't feel that hungry

He still couldn't accept what he had gone through If only he hadn't pressed Heidi into joining him on this unnecessary journey A week before she hadn't even known him and now he was responsible for her death He would have to explain her parents what had happened to their only daughter But before Adam could face them he still had to come up with some explanation for the things he hadn't yet begun to understand Not least the unimportant icon Unimportant?

After he had half finished the meal he wheeled the trolley out into the corridor and placed the 'Do not disturb' sign on the door Once back in the bedroom he stared out of the window over the city The sun looked as if it had another hour allocated for Geneva Adam lay down on the bed and began to consider what had happened in the last twenty-four hours of his life

"Antarctic is in possession of an icon of St George and the Dragon But we know from our files of that period that that particular icon was destroyed when the Grand Duke of Hesse's plane crashed over Belgium in 1937"

"That may well be what is written in your files," said the man on the other end of the phone "But what if your information at Langley turns out to be wrong and the icon was found by Goering but not returned to the Grand Duke?"

"But Stalin confirmed at Yalta that the icon and its contents had been destroyed in the plane crash He agreed to make no protest while he was not in possession of the original document After all, that was the reason Roosevelt appeared to be gaining so little at the time while Stalin was getting so much in return Can't you remember the fuss Churchill made?"

"I certainly can because he had worked out that it wasn't Britain who was going to benefit from such a decision"

"But if the Russians have now discovered the existence of the original icon?"

"You are suggesting they might also get their hands on th
original document?"

"Precisely So you must be sure to get to Antarctic befor
the Russians do, or for that matter, the Foreign Office "

"But I'm part of the Foreign Office team "

"And that's precisely what we want the Foreign Office t
go on believing "

"And who's been sleeping in my bed, said Mother Bear "

Adam woke with a start Looking down at him was a gi
who held a double bass firmly by the neck with one hand an
a bow in the other She was nearly six foot and certainl
weighed considerably more than Adam She had long, glean
ing red hair that was in such contrast to the rest of her that
was as if the Maker had started at the top and quickly lo
interest She wore a white blouse and a black flowing skirt th
stopped an inch above the ground

"Who are you?" asked Adam, startled

"I'm not Goldilocks, that's for sure," parried the girl "Mo
to the point, who are you?"

Adam hesitated "If I told you, you wouldn't believe m

"I can't imagine why not," she said "You don't look li
Prince Charles or Elvis Presley to me, so go on, try me."

"I'm Adam Scott "

"Am I meant to swoon and run to your side, or scream a
run away?" she enquired

Adam suddenly realised that the girl couldn't have watch
television or read a paper for at least two days He switch
tactics "I thought my friend Robin Beresford was meant
be booked into this room," he said confidently

"And so did I until I saw you on my bed "

"You're Robin Beresford?"

"You're quite sharp for someone who has just woken up

"But Robin?"

"It's not my fault my father wanted a boy," she said "A
you still haven't explained what you're doing on my bed "

"Is there any hope of you listening to me for five minu
without continually interrupting?" asked Adam

"Yes, but don't bother with any more fairy stories," [illegible]
Robin "My father was a born liar, and by the time I was
twelve I could see through him like a pane of glass"
"I should have a seat if I were you," said Adam "This m
take longer than the average double bass accompaniment"
"I'll remain on my feet, if you don't mind," said Robin.
least until the first lie"
"Suit yourself What would you like first? The good
or the bad news?"
"Try me on the bad news," said Robin "
"The Swiss police want to arrest me and
"What for?" interrupted Robin
"Murder," said Scott
"What's the good news?" she asked
"I'm innocent"

Romanov stood in the Ambassador's office and rested
fingers on the table "I blame myself," he said very quietly,
"even more than I blame any of you I underestimated the
Englishman He's good, and if any of you are hoping to kill
him before I get to him you'll have to be *very* good" No one
assembled in the Ambassador's office that night was disposed
to disagree with the Comrade Major Romanov paused to
study the group of men who had been flown in from several
Eastern satellites at short notice All with long record
service to the State but only one of them, Valchek,
known to Romanov personally and he worked too closely
Zaborski to be trusted Romanov had already faced the
that only a few of them were acquainted with Geneva
could only pray that the British and Americans were suff
from the same problem
His eyes swept around the room The Swiss police h
best chance of finding Scott and they weren't being
helpful, he thought ruefully However, Romanov had
pleased to learn from their head man stationed in Geneva that
the Swiss had also refused to co-operate with the British or
the Americans
"Comrades," he said, th [illegible] they had all settle

"there is no need to remind you that we have been entrusted [illegible]

a tight surveillance over Geneva in case Scott is still holed up somewhere in the city My own guess is that, like all amateurs, he is, and will wait until it's dark, perhaps even first light, before he makes a run for the nearest border The French border will be his most obvious choice Despite going to war against the Germans twice in the past fifty years, the English have never bothered to master the German language, although a few of them can manage to speak passable French So he's more likely to feel safe in that country It also offers him the opportunity to cross only one border before reaching the coast

"If he's stupid enough to try and leave by plane he will find we have the airport covered, if by train, we have the stations manned But my guess is still that he will try to escape by motor vehicle

"I shall therefore take five men to the French border with me while Major Valchek will take another five to Basle to cover the German crossing point The rest of you will remain on surveillance in Geneva Those of you who have just arrived will relieve those agents who are in the field already And don't expect Scott to be roaming around looking like a tourist on holiday Study your picture of the Englishman carefully and even be prepared for him to try and get away with some amateur disguise "

Romanov paused for effect "The man who brings me the Tsar's icon need have no fear for his future prosperity when we return home " Hopeful expressions appeared on their faces for the first time as Romanov pulled out the duplicate icon from his coat pocket and held it high above his head for all to see [illegible]

[illegible] original of this your task will be com- [illegible] lly, Comrades, because no photographs [illegible] Romanov added, "the only [illegible] this [illegible] on is that his has a small [illegible] the frame Once you see

the crown you will know that you have found the m
masterpiece."

Romanov put the icon back in his pocket and looked d
at the silent men

"Remember that Scott is good but he's not that good."

IAPTER THIRTEEN

i're not bad, Scott, not bad at all," said Robin, who had
ined standing by the double bass throughout Adam's
. "Either you're one hell of a liar, or I've lost my touch "
n smiled up at the massive girl, who made the bow she
holding in her right hand look like a toothpick
Am I permitted to see this icon, or am I just supposed to
your word for it?"
dam jumped off the bed and pulled out the package
aining the Tsar's icon from the map pocket of his trench-
. Robin put her double bass up against the wall and leaving
bow propped against it, lowered herself into the only chair
ne room.
dam handed the icon over to her For some time, she
ed at the face of St George without making any comment
s magnificent," she said at last "And I can understand
one wanting to possess it. But no painting could be worth
tragedy and trouble you've had to go through "
'I agree it's inexplicable," said Adam "But Rosenbaum or
atever his real name is has been willing to kill twice to get
hands on the piece, and he's already convinced me that as
g as I am in possession of the icon then I'll be the next in
."
Robin continued to stare at the tiny pieces of gold, red, blue
d yellow that made up St George and the Dragon
"No other clues?" she asked, looking up
"Only the letter given to my father by Goering "
Robin turned the painting over "What does that mean?"
e asked, pointing to the tiny silver crown embedded in the
od.

"That proves it was once owned by a Tsar, according to
man from Sotheby's And greatly enhances its value, he
sured me"

"Still couldn't be worth killing for," said Robin She had
the icon back to Adam "So what other secret is St Geo
keeping to himself?"

Adam shrugged and frowned, having asked himself the
question again and again since Heidi's death He returned
silent saint to his trenchcoat

"What was to have been your plan if you had stayed a
asked Robin "Other than making the bed?"

Adam smiled "I hoped to call Lawrence again once I
be sure he had returned home and check if he had an
news for me If he wasn't back, or couldn't help, I wa
to hire a car and try to get across the Swiss border to Fra
then on to England I felt sure that between Rosenba
his men and the Swiss Police they would between them
had all the airports and stations fully covered"

"No doubt Rosenbaum will have also thought that
out as well, if he's half as good as you claim," said Robi
we'd better try and get in touch with your friend Law
and see if he's come up with any bright ideas" She push
herself up out of the chair and walked across to the phone

"You don't have to get yourself involved," said Ad
hesitantly

"I am involved" said Robin And I can tell you it
more exciting than Schubert's Unfinished Once I've got
friend on the line I'll pass him over to you and then no
will realise who's phoning" Adam told her the number o
flat and she asked the girl on the switchboard to connect

Adam checked his watch eleven forty Surely Law
would be home by now? The phone didn't complete its
two rings before Robin heard a man's voice on the line
immediately handed the receiver over

"Hello, who is that?" asked the voice Adam was rem
[illegible] always found it that Lawrence new

Where are you?"
I'm still in Geneva "
My clients were waiting for you at eleven o'clock this ning "
So was Rosenbaum "
Who is Rosenbaum?"
A six-foot, fair-haired, blue-eyed monster, who seems demined to kill me "
Lawrence did not speak for some time "And are you still possession of our patron saint?"
"Yes, I am," said Adam "But what can be so important out . "
"Put the phone down and ring me back again in three nutes."
The line went dead Adam couldn't fathom the sudden ange in his old friend's manner What had he missed during se months he had lodged with him? He tried to recall tails that he had previously considered unimportant and that wrence had so skilfully disguised
"Is everything all right?" asked Robin, breaking into his oughts
"I think so," said Adam, a little mystified "He wants me ring back in three minutes Will that be all right with u?"
"This tour's already lost eight thousand pounds of the xpayers' money, so what difference can a few international alls make?" she said
Three minutes later, Robin picked up the receiver and epeated the number In one ring Lawrence was back on the ne
"Only answer my questions," said Lawrence
"No, I will not answer your questions," said Adam, becoming increasingly annoyed with Lawrence's manner "I want me or two of my own answered before you get anything more out of me Do I make myself clear?"
"Yes," said a more gentle sounding Lawrence
"Who is Rosenbaum?"
Lawrence didn't immediately reply.

"You'll get nothing further from me until you start telling the truth," said Adam.

"From your description I have every reason to believe Rosenbaum is a Russian agent whose real name is Alex Romanov "

"A Russian agent? But why should a Russian agent want to get his hands on my icon?"

"*I don't know,*" *said Lawrence* "*We were rathe* you might be able to tell us "

"Who's we?"

Another long silence

"Who's we?" repeated Adam "You can't really e to go on believing you work for Barclays DCO "

"I work at the Foreign Office," said Lawrence

"In what capacity?"

"I am not at liberty . ."

"Stop being so pompous, Lawrence In what capa

"I'm the Number Two in a small section that deals Lawrence hesitated

"Espionage I think is the current jargon we lay using," said Adam, "and if you want my icon that ba had better get me out of this mess alive because Rom willing to kill for it as I am sure you are aware "

"Where are you?"

"The Richmond Hotel "

"In a public phone box?" asked Lawrence, sound credulous

"No, in a private room "

"But not registered in your name?"

"No, in the name of a friend A girlfriend."

"Is she with you now?" asked Lawrence

"Yes," said Adam

"Damn," said Lawrence "Right Don't leave that until seven a m , then phone on this number again Th give me enough time to get everything in place "

"Is that *the best you can do?*" *said Adam, but the* had already gone dead "It looks as if I'm stuck with yo the night," he told Robin as he replaced the phone

"On the contrary, it is I who am stuck with you," said Robin
nd disappeared into the bathroom Adam paced around th
oom several times before he tested the sofa Either he had t
est his head on a cushion, balanced on the thin wooden arm
r he had to let his legs dangle over the far end By the tim
Robin had come back out clad in a pair of sky-blue pyjama
he had selected the floor as his resting place

"Not much of a chair, is it?" said Robin "But then Britis
Intelligence didn't warn me to book a double room " Sh
-mbed into the bed and turned out the light "Very comfort
e," were the last words she uttered

Adam lay down flat on the bedroom floor, using the cushio
m the chair as a pillow and a hotel dressing gown as
nket. He slept intermittently, his mind switching betwee
y the scon could be that important, how Lawrence knew s
ach about it, and, most immediate, how the hell were the
ing to get him out of the hotel alive?

mnanov waited patiently for the phone to be picked up.
"Yes,"
"Wher
ords w
hone w

dam woke with a start an hour before he was due to pho
awrence back For nearly forty minutes he lay on the flo
ith only Robin's steady breathing to remind him he was n
lone Suddenly he became aware of a strange sound comi
rom the corridor outside – two or three steps, a pause, th
whoosh, two or three steps, a pause, another whoosh Ada
aised himself up silently from the floor and crept to the do
The

newspaper shot under the door and the steps moved on
didn't have to bend down to see that it was his photogra

that dominated the front page of the international edit
the *Herald Tribune*

Adam took the paper into the bathroom, closed the
silently, switched on the light and read the lead artic
was yesterday's story with guarded comments from hi
commanding officer and embarrassed silence from his mo
He felt helpless

He crept up to Robin hoping she wouldn't wake *He s*
over her but she didn't stir He silently picked up the p
and dragged it to the bathroom He could only just ma
to close the door behind him He dialled the operator
repeated the number

When the ringing stopped, he immediately said, "Is
you, Lawrence?"

"Yes," came back the reply

"Things have become much worse now *I'm still hold*
in the hotel but my picture is on the front page of every pap

"I know," said Lawrence "We tried to prevent it, bu
again the Swiss wouldn't co-operate "

"Then I may as well give myself up to the Swiss," s
Adam "Damn it all, I am innocent "

"No, Adam, in Switzerland you're guilty until proven in
cent and you must have worked out by now that you
involved in something far more important than a dou
murder "

"What could be more important than a double murd
when the rest of the world thinks you're the murderer?" ask
Adam angrily

"I can understand exactly how you feel, but your o
chance now is to carry out my instructions to the letter a
treat with suspicion every other person with whom you
in contact "

"I'm listening," said *Adam*

"Just remember everything I say because I am only
The Royal Philharmonic Orch

or where you'll find their coach parked We will have a car
iting for you on the far side of the road The car is a black
ercedes and you will see a man in grey chauffeur's uniform
lding the door open for you We have already arranged that
other car will be able to park on that side of the road
tween nine thirty and ten thirty, so you can't mistake it.
st get into the back and wait There will be another man in
e back with you and you will then be driven to the safety of
r Consulate Do you need me to repeat any of that?"

"No," said Adam, "but ."

"Good luck," said Lawrence, and the phone went dead

By seven he had showered and shaved, while Robin re-
ained unrepentant in a deep sleep Adam envied her; only a
ng had to break outside and he was wide awake Two years
living in the Malayan jungle, never knowing when the

Robin did not stir for another thirty minutes, during which
me Adam sat on the sofa and went over Lawrence's plan in
s mind. At ten to eight she finally woke, even then taking
veral minutes before she was fully conscious Robin blinked
Adam and a large grin appeared on her face

"So you didn't murder me while I slept," she said

"I don't think you'd have noticed if I had," said Adam

"When your father is an habitual drunk and comes home
all hours of the night, you learn to sleep through anything,"
he explained, placing both feet firmly on the carpet. "Aren't
ou meant to have phoned London by now?"

"I already have"

"And what is the master plan to be?" she asked, rubbing
er eyes on her way to the bathroom.

"I will be leaving with you," said Adam

"Most of my one-night stands don't bother to stay that
fng," she remarked as she closed the bathroom door behind
er He tried to read the paper while the bath was filling up

"Does that mean we're sharing a room in Frankfurt as
ell?" she asked a few minutes later when the bathroom door

the icon was zipped up. But he couldn't stop himself shaking from a combination of fear and anticipation.

Robin looked at him. "Don't worry," he said gently. "It will all be over in a few minutes' time." Then she saw the paper on the floor. "I should sue them if I were you."

"Why?" asked Adam.

"You're a lot better looking than that." Adam smiled and walked across, and just managed to get his arms round her to give her a hug.

"Thanks for everything," he said. "But now we have to go."

"You're sounding more like one of my lovers all the time," said Robin, mournfully.

Adam picked up her suitcase while Robin jerked up the stem of the double bass onto her shoulder. She opened the door and checked the corridor: two of her colleagues from the RPO were waiting by the lift, otherwise there was nobody else in sight. Robin and Adam joined the two musicians and after "Good mornings" no one spoke until the lift doors slid open. Once the doors were closed Robin's colleagues couldn't resist taking a closer look at Adam. At first Adam was anxious they had recognised him from the newspaper. Then he realised that it was who Robin had spent the night with that fascinated them. Robin gave him a lewd wink, as if she fully intended to live off this one for a long time. For his part Adam ducked behind the double bass and remained in the corner breathing deeply in and out as the lift trundled down towards the ground floor. The doors sprang open and Robin waited for her two colleagues to leave before she shielded Adam as best she could all the way across the foyer. His eyes were now fixed on the front door. He could see the bus taking up most of the road and several members of the orchestra were already clambering on. One more minute and he should be safely away. He watched as the drums were packed carefully in the large boot.

"Oh, God, I forgot," said Robin. "I'm meant to put this in the boot at the back of the bus."

"Do it later," said Adam sharply. "Just keep going until you reach the coach door." Then he saw the car on the far side of the road. He felt light with relief, almost dizzy. The car

Adam, this is Stephen Grieg who, as you will already have gathered, is the orchestra's manager "

"Are you a musician as well?" asked Stephen as he shook Adam's hand

"No, I can truthfully say that I have never been able to master any instrument," said Adam

"He's tone deaf," butted in Robin "Takes after my father He's in tyres, actually," she continued, enjoying herself

"Oh, really Which company are you with?" enquired Stephen.

"I'm with Pirelli," said Adam, mentioning the first tyre company that came into his head

"Pirelli, the company that produces those fabulous calendars?"

"What's so special about their calendars?" asked Robin innocently "If you want one I'm sure Adam can get you one "

"Oh, that would be great," said Stephen "I hope it won't put you to too much trouble "

"No trouble at all," said Robin, leaning over Adam conspiratorially. "Actually, to let you in on a little family secret there is a rumour at HQ that Adam will soon be joining the main board The youngest member in the company's history, you know."

"How impressive," said the manager, taking a closer look at the orchestra's latest recruit

"Where shall I send the calendar?" bleated out Adam

"Oh, direct to the RPO No need to tell you the address, is there?"

"In a brown envelope, no doubt," said Robin "And don't worry about the year. It's not the dates that he gets worked up about "

"What time are we expecting to reach Frankfurt, Stephen?" shouted a voice from the front "Must leave you now," said the manager. "Thanks for the promise of a calendar Robin's right, of course – any year will do "

"Who taught you to spin a yarn like that?" asked Adam, as soon as he was out of earshot

"My father," said Robin "You should have heard him at his best In a class of his own The problem was my mother still believed every word "

"He would have been proud of you today "

"Now we've found out what you do for a living," said Robin, "may we learn what's next on the agenda for the youngest director of Pirelli?"

Adam smiled "I've started trying to reason like Rosenbaum, and I think he'll stay in Geneva for at least an hour, two at the most, so with luck I'll get a fifty-mile start on him." He unfolded the map across the two seats

His finger ran along the road the bus was travelling on, and it was Robin who spoke first

"That means you could make Zurich airport before he has any chance of catching up with you "

"Perhaps," said Adam, "but that would be too much of a risk Whoever Rosenbaum is," he went on, abiding by Lawrence's request to be cautious by not letting Robin into his secret, "we now know for certain that he has a professional organisation behind him so I must expect the airports to be the first place he will have covered And don't forget the Swiss police are still on the lookout for me as well "

"So why don't you come on to Frankfurt with us?" asked Robin "I can't believe you'll have any trouble from Stephen "

"I've thought about that already but discounted it also as too great a risk," said Adam

"Why?"

"Because, when Rosenbaum has had time to think about it," said Adam, "the one thing he'll remember is this bus Once he's found out the direction we're heading in he's sure to come after us "

Robin's eyes returned to the map "So you'll need to decide where and when to get off "

"Exactly," whispered Adam "I can risk sixty to seventy miles, but not a lot further "

Robin's finger ran along the little road "About here," she

aid, her finger stopping on a little town called Solothurn

"Looks about the right distance"

"But once you're off the bus what will you do for transport?"

"I've little choice but to walk or thumb lifts – unless I pinch another car"

"With your luck, Rosenbaum will be the one person who stops to pick you up"

"Yes, I've thought about that as well," said Adam "I would have to find a long stretch of road where I can see without being seen for about one hundred yards, and then thumb lifts only from British cars or cars with British number plates."

"They taught you a trick or two in the army, didn't they?" said Robin. "But how do you intend to cross the frontier with your passport?"

"That's one of the many problems I haven't yet come up with a solution for"

"If you decide to stay with us," said Robin, "it wouldn't be a problem."

"Why?" asked Adam

"Because whenever we cross a border they only count the number of people on the bus and the number of passports, and as long as they tally the customs officials don't bother to check everyone individually After all, why should they? The RPO is not exactly an unknown quantity All I would have to do is add your passport to the bundle and mention it to the manager."

"It's a clever idea but it's not on If Rosenbaum caught up with me while I'm still on this bus then I would be left with no escape route"

Robin was silent for a moment "Once you're on your own will you contact Lawrence again?"

"Yes I've got to let him know what happened this morning, because whoever he's dealing with must have a direct line to Rosenbaum."

"Could it be Lawrence himself?"

"Never," said Adam

"Your loyalty is touching," said Robin, turning to look at

him, "but what you actually mean is you don't want to belie it could be Lawrence"

"What are you getting at?"

"Like my mother didn't want to believe that my father w a liar and a drunk So she turned a blind eye to his little hobb You know even when he dropped dead of cirrhosis of the liv her only words were, 'strange for a man who never drank'"

Adam thought about his relationship with Lawrence a wondered if you could know someone for twenty years a really not know them at all

"Just be wary how much you let him know," advised Robin

They sat in silence as Adam checked the map and went ov all the different possible routes he could take once he had b the bus He decided to aim for the German border and take long route back to England, from Hamburg or Bremerhave rather than the shorter, more obvious route via Calais o Ostend

"Got it," said Robin suddenly

"Got what?" said Adam, looking up from the map

"How we solve your passport problem," she murmured

Adam glanced at her hopefully "If you let me have yo passport," she explained, "I'll substitute it for the member the orchestra who most resembles you No one will noti anything strange at our end until we're back home in Brita on Sunday night"

"Not a bad idea, if there is anyone who remotely resemble me"

"We'll have to see what we can do," said Robin She s bolt upright, her eyes moving slowly from person to perso By the time she had scanned all those in the bus from front back, a small smile appeared on her face "There are two our lot who bear a passable resemblance to you One is abo five years older and the other is four inches shorter, but yo go on working out the safest way of escape while I carry o some research Let me have your passport," she said Adam handed it over and then watched Robin walk up to the fron and sit next to the manager He was chatting to the drive about the most convenient place to stop for lunch

"I need to check something in my passport," Robin br
s. "Sorry to bother you "

"No bother You'll find them all under my seat in a pla
ag," he said, and continued his conversation with the dr

Robin bent down and started to shuffle through the p
orts as if searching for her own She picked out the
he had considered as possible substitutes and compared
hotographs The shorter man's photo looked nothing
Adam The older man's was at least five years out of date
ould have passed for Adam as long as the officials di
tudy the date of birth too carefully She bundled up
assports, placing Adam's in the middle She then put t
ack in the plastic bag and returned the bag under
nanager's seat.

Robin made her way back to her seat "Take a lool
yourself," she said, slipping the passport over to Adam
studied the photo

"Other than the moustache, not a bad likeness, and
certainly my best chance in the circumstances But what
happen when you return to London and they find out
passport has been substituted?"

"You'll be back in England long before us," said Ro
"So put this one in an envelope with the calendar and se
direct to the RPO in Wigmore Street, W1, and I'll see
they return yours " Adam vowed to himself that if he eve
back to London, he would become a life subscriber to
Friends of the Royal Philharmonic

"That seems to have solved one of your problems "

"For the moment at least," said Adam "I only wish I c
take you with me for the rest of the trip "

Robin smiled "Frankfurt, Berlin, Amsterdam – just in
you get bored I wouldn't mind meeting up with Rosenb

t solid right through, though God knows how I can prove something is hidden inside it was never intended to be vered by laymen like ourselves "

Quite an imaginative little thing, aren't you?" said Adam Comes naturally," she said as she handed the icon back to m. "Do let me know if you ever discover what is inside," added.

When I get five minutes to myself I might even spend some on one or two of my own theories," said Adam, returning icon to his trenchcoat pocket.

Two more kilometres to Solothurn," said Robin, pointing of the window at a signpost

dam buttoned up his coat "I'll see you off," she said, and both made their way up the aisle. When Adam reached front of the coach he asked the driver if he could drop him ust before they reached the next village

Sure thing," said the driver without looking back

Leaving us so soon?" said Stephen

Afraid so," said Adam. "But thanks for the lift And I t forget the calendar." The driver pulled into a lay-by, ssed a knob and the hydraulic doors swung back

Bye, Robin," said Adam, giving her a brotherly kiss on the ek.

Goodbye, baby brother," said Robin. "Give my love to ther if you see her before I do." She smiled and waved at n as the door swung closed and the coach returned to the hway to continue its journey on to Frankfurt

Adam was

ıced by everyone who came out of the hotel Three minutes
ɜr he thew his grey cap on the back seat and instructed
lchek to get rid of the car and then return to the Consulate
/alchek nodded He had already carried out Romanov's
lers to kill the two British agents as if he had been asked to
a burst water pipe The only thing that hadn't run to plan
s when Valchek tried to button up the dead chauffeur's
iform Romanov thought he detected the suggestion of a
ırk on Valchek's face when he realised who would have to
the chauffeur.

Romanov slipped into the shadows and waited for another
lf hour, by which time he was sure the plan must have been
orted from the London end He hailed a taxi and asked the
ıver to take him to the Soviet Consulate. He didn't notice the
xi-driver's look of disbelief at his passenger's chauffeur-clad
sion.

Could he really have lost Scott twice? Had he also underimated him? Once more and Zaborski was going to require
very convincing explanation

On his way back to the Consulate an image kept flashing
cross Romanov's mind, but he couldn't make any sense of it.
omething had happened outside the hotel that didn't quite
t. If he could only think clearly for a moment he felt certain
: would become clear to him. He kept playing the last thirty
ıinutes over in his mind, as if rewinding the reel of an old
ilm, but some of the frames still remained blurred

Once Romanov was back in the Consulate Valchek handed
ıim a large envelope which he was informed had just arrived
n the diplomatic pouch from Moscow.

Romanov read over the decoded telex a second time, still
ınable to fathom its possible significance.

"Information has come to light concerning the late Colonel
Gerald Scott, DSO, OBE, MC, that may prove useful when
you make contact with your quarry Full documentation will
be with you by morning, latest, AJ."

Romanov wondered what headquarters had discovered
about Scott's father that could possibly prove of interest to
him. It was still his avowed intention that the son would be

despatched to join the father long before any further o
from Moscow had arrived

Romanov thought of his own father and the escape n
had made possible by leaving such a fortune, and how
sake of advancement he had betrayed him to the State
for the sake of further advancement he had to kill Sc
bring home the icon If he failed . He dismissed both f
. "Either he's very clever or he's living on an amateur's
Romanov said, moving into the small office that ha
made available for his use Valchek who followed him
comment other than to ask what he should do next

"Tell me what you saw when we were at the hotel"

"What do you mean?" asked Valchek

"Don't ask questions," said Romanov, changing ba
his own clothes, "answer them Tell me everything your
ber seeing, from the moment we drew up outside the h

"We arrived at the Richmond a few minutes befor
began Valchek, "parked the Mercedes on the far side
road, and waited for Scott to show up We stayed pu
few minutes after ten but Scott never materialised"

"No, no, no Be more specific Don't just generalis
instance, do you remember anything unusual taking
while we were waiting?"

"Nothing in particular," said Valchek "People conti
entering and leaving the hotel – but I'm sure Scott
among them"

"You are fortunate to be so certain What happened
asked Romanov

"Next? You instructed me to go back to the Consula
wait for you to return"

"What time was that?"

"It must have been about seven minutes past ten I re
ber because I checked my watch when that coach left"

"The coach?" said Romanov

"Yes, the one that was being loaded up with musical in
ments It left about "

"Instruments, that's it," said Romanov "Now I reme
what was worrying me Cellos, violins, and a double bass

. go into the boot " Valchek looked puzzled but said
ng "Ring the hotel immediately and find out who was
at bus and where they are heading " Valchek scurried

manov checked his watch ten fifty-five We are going to
to move, and move quickly He pressed the intercom by
de of the phone "I want a fast car, and more important,
erb driver " Valchek returned as Romanov replaced the
ver "The bus was hired by the Royal Philharmonic
estra, who are on a European tour "
Where are they heading next?" asked Romanov
'rankfurt."

trolled away from the village, having checked everything
a professional soldier's eye The main street was deserted
for a little boy who relentlessly kicked a plastic football
a gap in the hillside which he was using as a goal The
turned when he saw Adam and kicked the ball towards
Adam kicked it back and the boy took it in his arms, a
e smile appearing on his face The smile disappeared as he
ched Adam continue quickly up the hill There were only
w old houses on the main road On one side was a dangerous
ine with tree-covered hills rising in the distance, while on
other side stretched green fields in which cows, bells
nd their necks, munched happily away It made Adam feel
ngry.
He went further up the road until he came to a sharp bend
he hill. Standing on the corner he could see down the hill for
out half a mile without being seen He tested the feasibility of
plan for several minutes and soon became expert at picking
t British cars or cars with British number plates as far as
o or three hundred yards away It didn't take long to work
t how few foreigners bought British
During the next twenty minutes he thumbed optimistically
seven cars with English number plates heading towards
usanne, but they all ignored him He had forgotten just how
sy it had been for him when he was a cadet in uniform In
ose days almost everyone would stop He checked his watch

he could only risk it for a few more minutes. Three cars refused to pull up and when a fourth slowed down it sped away again as Adam ran towards it

By eleven twenty Adam decided he could no longer risk being seen on the road. He stared down the ravine, realising there was no alternative left open to him now but to make a fast. He shrugged and began to climb down one of the trails that led into the valley, in the hope of meeting up with the other road that was marked clearly on the map

He cursed when he looked at the open ground between and safety. If only he'd started an hour earlier

"I fear Antarctic has become expendable"

"Why?"

"Because we now know his father was involved in b Goering to an easy death"

"I don't understand"

"No reason why you should although it's quite simple patriotic stiff-upper-lipped Englishman of yours is the the bastard who smuggled a cyanide capsule into Go cell at Nuremberg. His reward for services rendered to to be the Tsar's icon"

"But all the members of D4 are convinced that he's o hope"

"I don't give a damn what your D4 thinks. If th would side with the Germans during a war, why shoul son side with the Russians in peace?"

"Like father, like son"

"Precisely"

"So what am I expected to do?"

"Just keep us briefed as to what the Foreign Office Our agents in Switzerland will do the rest"

"Faster!" said Romanov, aware that it was not pos the Ambassador's driver was proving to be a consu professional. Not once did Romanov feel that he had a gap, a light, a chance to overtake. In fact anoth kilometres an hour on the speedometer might well hav

[illegible] the man stopped the vehicle just off the road on the edge [illegible] the mountain.

"Don't either of you speak Just leave everything to me," [illegible]id Romanov, "and remain near the driver in case there's [illegible]ouble." Romanov jumped out of the car and ran towards the [illegible]ach, his eyes already searching for anyone who might be [illegible]tempting to leave it. He banged on the door impatiently [illegible]ntil the driver pressed a knob and the big doors swung open. [illegible]omanov leapt on, with the other two following only paces [illegible]ehind He took out his passport from an inside pocket, flashed [illegible] in the frightened driver's face and shouted, "Who's in charge [illegible]ere?"

Stephen Grieg stood up "I am the manager of the company, [illegible]nd I can . "

"Swiss police," said Romanov Grieg was about to ask a question when Romanov said, "When you left your hotel in Geneva this morning, did you take on any extra passengers?"

"No," said Grieg Romanov scowled. "Unless you count Robin Beresford's brother "

"Rob[illegible] [illegible] uired Romanov, his eye-

[illegible] Beresford But he only [illegible] Then he got off."

"Which one of you is Robin?" said Romanov, staring around a sea of men's faces.

"I am," piped up a voice from the back. Romanov marched down the bus and saw the double bass case and then everything [illegible] large instruments? He stared down at the heavy-framed woman who now sat behind the monstrous instrument.

"Your brother is the one called Adam?"

"Yes," said Robin.

"Quite a coincidence."

"I don't understand what you mean," she said, trying not to sound nervous.

"The man I am looking for just happens to be called Adam as well."

"Common enough name," said Robin. "Perhaps you've never read the first chapter of the Bible?"

"Six foot one inch, perhaps two inches, dark hair, dark eyes, slim and fit. Not a convincing brother for you," added Romanov studying her frame.

Robin pushed back her red hair but didn't rise. Romanov [illegible] expression from one of uninterested politeness.

"I will give you one more chance to co-operate with me [illegible] said Romanov, "I [illegible]

"With the authority of the Swiss police," Romanov confidently

"Then no doubt you'll be happy to show me proof of identity "

"Don't be insolent," Romanov said sharply He to over her

"It is you who are insolent," said Robin, standing up drive in front of our coach like a lunatic, nearly send down the mountain, then the three of you burst in like a of Chicago mobsters, claiming to be Swiss police I ha idea who you are or what you are, but I'll let you in secrets You touch me and there are forty men on this who will beat you and your two cronies to pulp And you managed to get off this bus alive, we are members Royal Philharmonic Orchestra of Great Britain, and a are guests of the Swiss Government. In a few moments we cross the border, we will become guests of the West G Government, so you're about to get yourself on to ever page in the world. Single-handedly, you will bring a new meaning to the words 'diplomatic incident' " She forward and pointing a finger at him said, "So I'm tellin whoever you are, in as ladylike fashion as I can, 'piss o

Romanov stood staring at her for some moments an backed away as Robin's eyes remained glued on him he reached the front he waved at Valchek and the cha indicating that they should leave the coach Reluctant obeyed him The coach driver closed the door the m Romanov's foot touched the ground and he quickly into first gear and drove back on to the highway

The entire orchestra turned round and gave Robin t of ovation normally reserved for the entrance of the le the orchestra.

Sir Morris Youngfield glanced round the table everyone was in place despite the few minutes' notice the head of DI had given them

"Let's hear the latest report," said Sir Morris, looking up at his Number Two, who was once again seated at the far end of the table

"Not clever, sir, I'm afraid," began Lawrence "Two of our most experienced agents were selected to pick up Scott at the Richmond Hotel as planned and then take him to the safety of the British Consulate "

"So what happened?" asked Sir Morris

"No one at our Geneva office can be certain Our men certainly never turned up at the hotel and they haven't been seen since "

"What are the Swiss police saying?" asked Busch.

"They are not being very helpful," said Lawrence, turning to the American "They are aware that we are not the only foreign power involved and as is their custom in such circumstances, they have no intention of being seen to favour either side "

"Bloody Swiss," said Snell with feeling

"And where do we imagine Scott is now?" asked Matthews.

"We've also drawn a blank on that," said Lawrence Matthews smiled at Lawrence's embarrassment "We feel certain he must have got on the coach with the girl –" he looked down at the sheet of paper on the table in front of him "– Robin Beresford But he wasn't on it when we were waiting for them at the border The orchestra is due at their Frankfurt hotel in about one hour so we will be able to find out more then The German police are being far more co-operative," Lawrence added

"Meanwhile what else are *we* doing?" asked Sir Morris

"Checking all the usual places as well as keeping a close eye on Romanov who, incidentally, turned up on the French border last night One of our old hands recognised him despite the fact that he's cut his hair very
apparently "

"So Scott could be anywhere by no

you think he's still in Switzerland, or managed to cross ot
the borders?"

Lawrence hesitated "I have no idea," he said wit
expression

Sir Morris stared at him from the far end of the tabl
didn't comment

"Do you think he'll contact you again?" asked Snell

"Almost certainly, if he's still alive."

"If Romanov is still in Geneva, Scott *must* still be a
said Busch "Because the moment he gets his hands o
soon he will head east."

"Agreed," said Lawrence, "and we have men statio
the airport checking every flight out to the East. I the
suggest we follow up any further leads and assemble
tomorrow at seven a m unless Scott contacts me before

Sir Morris nodded and rose to leave. Everyone stood

"Thank you, gentlemen," he said, and walked towa
far end of the room. As he passed Lawrence, he mur
"Perhaps you could come to my office when you
moment."

Adam slipped and stumbled the last few yards down th
before finally landing with a bump on his backside. H
were cut and bleeding in several places, his trousers t
smeared with clay and earth. He sat still for about two
trying to get his breath back as he looked back up tow
road. He had taken just under an hour to cover wha
could have managed in three seconds Still, there h
one advantage no one could have seen him from the
gazed across the valley ahead Anyone would be ab
him now, but he had left himself with

his head The boy ran up and jumped towards the ball but however hard he tried he couldn't reach it

"Have you seen any strangers this morning?" he asked in slow deliberate French

"Yes, yes," said the boy "But he didn't score a goal"

[illegible]

dr [illegible]

followed after him [illegible]

"*Non, non,*" cried the little boy who followed after them Romanov looked back to see the boy was standing on the spot where Adam had been thumbing lifts, pointing out over the ravine

Romanov quickly turned to the driver "Get the car, I need the glasses and the map" The driver ran back down the hill once again followed by the boy A few minutes later the Mercedes drew up by Romanov's side The driver jumped out and handed the glasses over to Romanov, while Valchek spread a map out on the car bonnet

Romanov focused the binoculars and began to sweep the hills in the distance It was several minutes before the glasses stopped and settled upon a brown speck climbing up the farthest hill

"The rifle," were Romanov's only words

Valchek ran to the boot of the car and took out a Dragunov sniper's rifle [illegible]

[illegible] arm moved with him, keeping the same pace "Kill him," said Romanov Valchek was grateful for the [illegible]

less da [illegible]

man's [illegible]

the tri [illegible]

when [illegible]

a thud. Romanov smiled and lowered the glasses

"Unless the first bullet hit him, in which case it could take him longer So how long will it take you to get to that border?" Romanov asked the driver

The chauffeur studied the map "About twenty-five, at most thirty minutes, Comrade Major," came back the reply

Romanov turned and looked back towards the hills "Thirty minutes, Scott, that's how long you've got to live "

When the car sped away, the little boy ran home as fast as he could He quickly told his mother everything he had seen She smiled understandingly Only children always had such vivid imaginations

When Adam looked up, he was relieved to see the road was only about a mile away. He jogged towards it at a steady pace, but found that the running caused him even more discomfort. He was anxious to stop and check the wound but waited till he reached the road The bullet had torn through the outer flesh of his shoulder muscle leaving him in considerable pain An inch lower and he would have been unable to move He was relieved to see that the blood had only made a small stain on his trenchcoat He folded a handkerchief in four and placed it between his shirt and the wound He knew he daren't risk a hospital As long as he could get to a pharmacy by nightfall, he felt he could take care of the problem himself

Adam checked the map He was now only a few kilometres from the French border, and decided, because of the wound, to cross into France as quickly as possible rather than keep to his original plan of going up through Basle and on to Bremerhaven

Desperately he began to thumb at any car that passed, no longer bothering with the nationality of the number plates. He felt he was safe for about twenty minutes but after that he would have to disappear back into the hills Unfortunately there were far fewer cars driving towards the French border than there had been on the Basle road, and they all ignored his plea He feared that the time was fast approaching for him to return to the hills when a yellow Citroën drew into the side of the road a few yards ahead of him

By the time Adam had reached the car the woman in the passenger seat had already wound down the window

"Where – are – you – going?" asked Adam, pronouncing each word slowly and carefully

The driver leant across, took a lengthy look at Adam and said in a broad Yorkshire accent, "We're on our way to Dijon Any use to you, lad?"

"Yes, please," said Adam, relieved that his scruffy appearance had not put them off

"Then jump in the back with my daughter"

Adam obeyed The Citroën moved off, as Adam checked out of the back window, he was relieved to see an empty road stretching out behind him

"Jim Hardcastle's the name," said the man, as he moved the car into third gear Jim appeared to have a large, warm smile perpetually imprinted on his chubby red face His dark ginger hair went straight back and was plastered down with Brylcreem. He wore a Harris tweed jacket and an open-necked shirt that revealed a little red triangle of hair It looked to Adam as if he had given up attempts to do anything about his waistline "And this is the wife, Betty," he said, gesturing with his elbow towards the woman in the front seat She turned towards Adam, revealing the same ruddy cheeks and warm smile Her hair was dyed blonde but the roots remained an obstinate black "And sitting next to you is our Linda," Jim Hardcastle added, almost as an afterthought "Just left school and going to work for the local council, aren't you, Linda?" Linda nodded sulkily Adam stared at the young girl whose first experiment with make-up hadn't worked that well The dark over-lined eye shadow and the pink lipstick did not help what Adam considered was an attractive girl probably in her late teens. "And what's your name, lad?"

"Dudley Hulme," said Adam, recalling the name on his new passport "And are you on holiday?" he asked, trying to keep his mind off the throbbing shoulder

"Mixing business with pleasure," said Jim "But this part of the trip is rather special for Betty and myself We flew to Genoa on Saturday and hired the car to tour Italy First we

.velled up through the Simplon Pass It's a bit breathtaking
er our home town of Hull "

Adam would have asked for details, but Jim didn't reckon any interruptions. "I'm in mustard, you see Export director : Colman's, and we're on our way to the annual conference the IMF. You may have heard of us " Adam nodded owingly. "International Mustard Federation," Jim added. lam wanted to laugh, but because of the pain in his shoulder, anaged to keep a straight face

"This year they've elected me President of the IMF, the gh point of my career in mustard, you might say And, if I ay be so bold as to suggest, an honour for Colman's as well, e finest mustard in the world," he added, as if he said it at ast a hundred times a day "As President I have to preside ver the conference meetings and chair the annual dinner onight I shall be making a speech of welcome to delegates om all over the world "

"How fascinating," winced Adam, as the car went over a othole.

"It certainly is," said Jim "People have no idea how many nakes of mustards there are " He paused for a second and hen said, "*One hundred and forty-three There's no doubt* he Frogs make one or two good attempts and even the Krauts lon't do too badly, but there's still nothing to beat Colman's. British is best after all, I always say Probably the same in your line of country," said Jim "By the way, what is your line of country?"

"I'm in the army," said Adam

"What's a soldier doing thumbing a lift on the borders of Switzerland?"

"Can I speak to you in confidence?" asked Adam

"Mum's the word," said Jim "We Hardcastles know how to keep our traps shut "

In the case of Jim's wife and daughter, Adam had no proof to the contrary

"I'm a captain in the Royal Wessex, at present on a NATO exercise," began Adam "I was dumped off the coast at Brindisi in Italy last Sunday with a false passport and ten English

pounds I have to be back in barracks at Aldershot by m
Saturday " When he saw the look of approbation ap
Jim's face, he felt even Robin would have been proud
Mrs Hardcastle turned around to take a more careful
him

"I knew you were an officer the moment you opene
mouth," said Jim "You couldn't have fooled me I
sergeant in the Royal Army Service Corps in the la
myself Doesn't sound much, but I did my bit for
country " The acronym for the Corps – 'Rob All
Comrades' – flashed through Adam's mind "Have yo
any action yourself, Dudley?" Jim was asking

"A little in Malaya," said Adam

"I missed that one," said Jim "After the big one wa
I went back into mustard So where's the problem in
you back to England?"

"There are about eight of us trying to reach Aldersho
a thousand Americans trying to stop us "

"Yanks," said Jim with disdain "They only join wa
as we're about *to win them All medals* and glory, th
No, I mean is there any real problem?"

"Yes, the border officials have been hoofed that eight
officers are attempting to get over into France and the
love to be the ones to pull us in Only two officers out of
made it back to barracks last year," said Adam, warmi
his own theme "Both were promoted within weeks "

"The Swiss," said Jim "They're even worse tha
Americans They don't even join in a war – happy to
both sides at *the same time They won't pick you up*
believe me. I'll see to that "

"If you can get me across the border Mr Hardc

ut twenty, Comrade Major," said the driver.
d we should still make the French border?"
aps it might be safer to stop and fill up," suggested
er.
re is no time for safety," said Romanov. "Go faster."
, Comrade Major," said the driver, who decided it was
occasion to point out they would run out of petrol even
uickly if he was made to push the car to its limits.
y didn't you fill the tank up this morning, you fool?"
omanov
ought I was only taking the Consul to lunch at the
all today, and I had intended to fill the tank up during
ch hour."
t pray for your sake that we reach the border," said
ov, "Faster."
Mercedes touched 140 kilometres per hour and Roma-
laxed only when he saw a sign saying, '*Rappelle Douanes*
mètres'. A few minutes later a smile grew on his face as
assed the five-kilometre sign, and then suddenly the
splattered as it tried helplessly to continue turning over
speed the pressed-down accelerator was demanding.
ndicator on the speedometer started to drop steadily as

come up with an idea," said Jim, as they passed a
at warning drivers that the border was only two kilo-
s away.
That's that, sir?" asked Adam, who could now feel his
der beating like a steady tune hammered out by a child
in drum. "When it comes to the time for us to present
assports, you put your arm round Linda and start

Mrs Hardcastle turned round and gave Adam a
chiner look as Linda went scarlet. Adam looked acros
mini-skirted pink-tipped Linda and felt embarrassed b
predicament her father had placed his daughter in. "
argue with me, Dudley," continued Jim confidently "I
ise you what I have in mind will work." Adam did
comment and neither did Linda. When they reached the
border a few moments later, Adam could see that there
two checkpoints about one hundred yards apart. Driver
avoiding one line of traffic in which a row was going on
a customs official and an irate lorry driver Jim drove
straight behind the gesticulating Frenchman "Give me
passport, Dudley," he said Adam handed over the red
passport.

Why did you choose this line? Adam wanted to ask.

"I chose this line," continued Jim, "because by the
comes for our passports to be inspected I reckon the
officer will be only too happy to allow us through
much fuss " As if in reaction to his logic, a long queue
to form behind Jim, but still the argument raged in
them. Adam remained alert, continually looking ou
back window, waiting for the moment when Romano
appear When he turned back, he was relieved to find
lorry in front of them was being told to pull over into
and wait

Jim drove quickly up to the customs post - "Get r
you two," he said

Up until that point Adam had kept his hands hidde
trencheoat pocket because they were so scratched and b
But he obeyed Jim and took Linda in his arms and kiss
perfunctorily, one eye still open watching for Roman
his surprise she parted his lips and began exploring ins
mouth with her tongue Adam thought about protestin
realised there was no way he could make it sound gall
credible

"The wife, the daughter and the future son-in-law,'
im, handing over the four passports

liceman started

all the trouble about, officer?"
or you to worry about," said the policeman,
gh the passports "I hope it hasn't incon-
."
said Jim "They didn't even notice," he said,
his shoulder and laughing
nan shrugged and, handing the passports back,
:," waving them on
mustard Jim, that's what they call me back in
ked over his shoulder towards Adam. "You can
, Dudley, thank you." Adam felt Linda release
e reluctance
l at him shyly, then turned towards her father
have to go over the French border, don't we?"

eady been alerted to look out for him and I can
: hasn't been through this post," said the senior
r "Otherwise one of my men would have spotted
u want to double-check, be my guest "
vent quickly from officer to officer showing them
photograph of Adam, but none of them could
resembling him Valchek joined him a few
and confirmed that Scott was not in any of the
ting to be allowed over the border and that the
s being pushed into the border garage
to the hills, Comrade Major?" asked Valchek
want to be absolutely certain he hasn't managed
orders"
official emerged from his post in the centre of
ny luck?" he asked
l Romanov glumly "You seem to be right "
as much If any of my men had let the English-
they would have been looking for a new job by

nodded in acknowledgment "Could I have
f your staff?"
– unless there's a couple of them taking a break

If so you'll find them in the bar about a hundred towards the French border point."

Four customs officers and a French waitress were the people to be found in the bar. Two of the officers were playing pool while the other two sat at a corner table, drinking. Romanov took the photo out once more and showed it to the two men at the pool table. They both shook their heads in uninterested fashion and returned to potting the brightly coloured balls.

The two Russians made their way to the bar. Valchek bought Romanov a cup of coffee and a sandwich, which he took to the table where the other two border guards sat. One of them was telling his colleague the trouble he had had with a French lorry driver who was trying to smuggle Swiss watches over the border. Romanov pushed the photograph across the table.

"Have you seen this man today?"

Neither showed any sign of recognition and the young man quickly returned to his story. Romanov sipped his coffee and began to consider whether he should make a run for it or call for reinforcements to sweep the hills. Then he noticed the young man's eyes kept returning to the photo. He asked once again if he had seen Scott.

"No, no," said the young officer, a little too quickly. In Moscow Romanov would have had a 'yes' out of him in minutes, but he would have to follow a more gentle path here.

"How long ago?" Romanov asked quietly.

"What do you mean?" asked the policeman.

"How long ago?" repeated Romanov in a firmer voice.

"It wasn't him," said the officer, sweat now appearing on his forehead.

[illegible] try"

Still if you should ever be Hull way, look us up." He wi
card out of his top pocket and passed it over his shoulder
Adam studied the embossed letters and wondered w
'MIFT' stood for He didn't ask

Where in Dijon would you like to be dropped off?" as
Jim as he drove into the outskirts of the town

Anywhere near the centre that's convenient for you," s
plied Adam

"Just holler when it suits you then," said Jim "Of cour
I always maintain that a meal without mustard . ."

"Can you drop me on the next corner?" said Adam sudden

"Oh," said Jim, sad to be losing such a good listener As
he reluctantly drew the car up alongside the kerb

Adam kissed Linda on the cheek before getting out of th
back He then shook hands with Mr and Mrs Hardcastle

"Nice to have made your acquaintance," said Jim. "If yo
change your mind you'll find us at the hotel Is that blo
on your shoulder, lad?"

"Just a graze from a fall – nothing to worry about Would
want the Americans to think they'd got the better of me"

"No, no, of course not," said Jim "Well, good luck"

As the car moved off Adam stood on the pavement watchi

[illegible]

up and down the street for a green cross above a door Adam
had to walk only fifty yards before he spotted one He entered
the shop tentatively and checked the shelves

A tall man with short fair hair, wearing a long leather coat,
stood in the corner with his back to the entrance Adam froze
Then the man turned round, frowning at the packet of tablets
he wanted to purchase, while at the same time rubbing his
thick Gallic moustache

Adam walked up to the counter

"Do you speak English, by any chance?" he asked the
dispenser, trying to sound confident

"Passable, I ho " me back the reply

"I need some iodine, cotton wool, a bandage and heavy Elastoplast. I fell and bruised my shoulder on a rock," Adam explained.

The dispenser quickly put the order together without showing much interest

"This is what you require but you will find that the trade names are different," explained the dispenser "That will be twenty-three francs," he added

"Will Swiss do?"

"Certainly."

"Is there a hotel anywhere nearby?" asked Adam

"Around the next corner, on the other side of the square "

Adam thanked him, handed over the Swiss notes, and then left the pharmacy in search of the hotel The Hotel Frantel was, as promised, only a short distance away He walked across the square and up the steps into the hotel to find several people were waiting at reception to be booked in Adam swung his trencheoat over his blood-stained shoulder and walked past them as he checked the signs on the wall He then strode across the entrance hall as though he were a guest of several days' standing. He followed the sign he had been looking for which took him down a flight of stairs, to come head on with three further signs. The first had the silhouette of a man on the door, the second a woman, the third a wheelchair

He opened the third tentatively and was surprised to find behind it nothing more than a sizeable square room with a high-seated lavatory against the wall Adam locked himself in and let his trencheoat fall to the ground

He rested for a few minutes before slowly stripping to the waist. He then ran a basinful of warm water

Adam was thankful for the endless first-aid seminars every officer had to go through, never believing they would serve any purpose. Twenty minutes later the pain had subsided and he even felt comfortable.

He picked up his coat with his right hand and tried to throw it back over his shoulder The very movement caused the icon to fall out of the map pocket and onto the tiled floor As it hit the ground, the sound made Adam fear that it might have

broken in half. He stared down anxiously and then fell to his knees.

The icon had split open like a book.

CHAPTER FIFTEEN

When Adam returned to the Hotel Frantel an hour lat
guests would have recognised the man who had crept in
that afternoon

He wore a new shirt, trousers, tie and a double-br
blazer that wouldn't be fashionable in Britain for at
another year. Even the raincoat had been ditched becau

He booked himself into a single room in the name of D
Hulme and a few minutes later took the lift to the third

Lawrence picked the phone up even before Adam hea
second ring

"It's me," said Adam

"Where are you?" were Lawrence's first words

"I'll ask the questions," said Adam

"I can understand how you feel," said Lawrence, "bu

"No buts. You must be aware by now that someone o
so called team has a direct line to the Russians because
Romanov and his friends who were waiting for me outsi
hotel in Geneva, not your lot."

"We realise that now," said Lawrence

"We?" said Adam. "Who are we? Because I'm fin
rather hard to work out who's on my side."

"You don't believe that."

"Yes, your friend Romanov took a shot at me today, hit me
n the shoulder Next time we meet I intend it to be the other
way round and it won't be the shoulder "

"There won't be a next time," said Lawrence, "because
we'll get you out safely if you'll only let me know where you
re "

The memory of Robin's words, "Just be wary of how much
ou let him know," stopped Alan from telling Lawrence his
xact location

"Adam, for God's sake, you're on your own; if you don't
rust me who can you trust? I admit it looks as if we let you
own But it won't happen again "

There was another long silence before Adam said, "I'm in
ijon "

"Why Dijon?"

"Because the only person who would give me a lift was
oing to a mustard conference in Dijon "

Lawrence couldn't stop himself smiling "Give me your
mber and I'll phone you back within the hour "

"No," said Adam, "I'll phone you back in one hour "

"Adam, you've got to show some trust in me "

"Not now that I know what it is you're all after, I can't
ord to trust anybody "

Adam replaced the phone and stared down at the icon which
open on the bed It wasn't the signature of Stoeckle or
vard that worried him It was the date – June 20, 1966 –
t read like a death warrant

oodnight, sir," said the doorkeeper as the senior civil ser-
t left Century House that evening "Another late night
you," he added sympathetically He acknowledged the
rman by raising his rolled umbrella a few inches. It had
n another late night, but at least they had caught up with

conspicuous in his black coat and pin-striped trousers. H
tapped his umbrella nervously before hailing a passing taxi

"Dillon's bookshop, Malet Street," he told the driver, befor
getting in the back Already seven thirty, but he still wouldn
be too late and a few minutes either way wasn't going to mak
that much difference Pemberton had agreed to remain at h
desk until all the loose ends were tied up and he was sure tha
nothing could go wrong this time He allowed himself a wi
smile as he thought how they had all accepted his plan It ha
the double advantage of ensuring enough time for them to g
their best men into position, while keeping Scott well out
sight in a deserted hideaway He hoped that this was the la
time they would expect him to come up with an origin
proposal

[illegible]

those streets which even London cabbies had to think abo
for a few moments He had walked only a matter of yar
before he disappeared down some stone steps to a baseme
flat He inserted a Yale key in the front door lock, turned
quickly, stepped inside and closed the door behind him

During the next twenty minutes he made two telepho
calls – one international, one local – and then had a bath
emerged back on Ridgmount Gardens less than an hour la
dressed in a casual brown suit, pink floral open shirt a
brown brogue shoes The parting in his hair had chang
sides He returned to Dillon's on foot and hailed another ta

"The British Museum," he instructed the driver, as
stepped into the back He checked his watch nearly ten p
eight Scott would be fully briefed by now, he thought, althou
his associates would be already on the way back to Dijon,
his plan had allowed for a two-hour delay

The taxi drew up outside the British Museum He paid a

walked up the twelve steps in front of the museum, admiring the Byzantine architecture as he regularly did each week, before walking back down again to hail another taxi.

"Middlesex Hospital, please," was all he said. The taxi executed a U-turn and headed west.

Poor bastard. If Scott hadn't opened that envelope in the first place the icon would have ended up with its rightful owner.

"Shall I drive up to the entrance?" asked the cabbie.

"Yes, please."

A moment later he strolled into the hospital, checked the board on the wall as if he were looking for a certain ward, then walked back out on to the street. From the Middlesex Hospital it always took him about three minutes at a steady pace to reach Charlotte Street, where he stopped outside a house and pressed a buzzer attached to a little intercom.

"Are you a member?" enquired a voice suspiciously.

"Yes."

In the hour Adam phoned and listened carefully to all Lawrence had to say.

"I'll take one more risk," said Adam, "but if Romanov turns on this time I'll hand over the icon to him personally and with a piece of property so valuable that no amount of money the Americans could offer would be sufficient to purchase it back."

When Adam put the phone down Lawrence and Sir Morris replayed the conversation back over again and again.

[illegible]

[illegible] of his desk.

"What does that buzz mean?" asked Romanov. "We are not running out of petrol again, are we?"

"No, sir," said the chauffeur. "It's the new calling device fitted to all ambassadorial cars. It means they expect me to check in."

"Turn round and go back to that petrol station we passed [illegible]" Romanov [illegible]

within the hour They had travelled about ninety kilometres beyond Dijon and neither he nor Valchek had even seen a yellow Citroën going either way

"Fill up again while I phone Geneva," Romanov said the moment he saw the petrol station He ran to the phone box while Valchek still kept a watchful eye on the passing traffic

"I am answering your signal," said Romanov when he was put through to the euphemistically titled Second Secretary

"We've had another call from Mentor," said the Second Secretary "How far are you from Dijon?"

The member stumbled about the dimly lit room until he came across an unoccupied table wedged up against a pillar in one corner He sat down on a little leather stool by its side He swivelled around nervously, as he always did when waiting for someone to bring him his usual malt whisky on the rocks When the drink was placed on the table in front of him he sipped at it, in between trying to discover if there were any new faces spread around the dark room Not an easy task, as he refused to put on his glasses His eyes eventually became accustomed to the dim light thrown out by the long red fluorescent bulb that stretched above the bar All he could make out were the same old faces staring at him hopefully, but he wanted something new

The proprietor, noticing that a regular customer had remained on his own, came out and sat opposite him on the other little stool. The member never could get himself to look the man in the eyes

"I've got someone who's very keen to meet you," whispered the proprietor.

"Which one?" he asked, looking up once more to check the faces at the bar

"Leaning on the juke box in the corner The tall, slim one

And he's young," added the proprietor He looked towards the blaring machine. A pleasing new face smiled at him. He smiled nervously back

"Was I right?" asked the proprietor.

"Is he safe?" was all he asked.

"No trouble with this one Upper-class lad, right out of a top-drawer public school Just wants to earn a bit of pocket money on the side "

"Fine " The member took a sip of whisky.

The proprietor walked over to the juke box The member watched him talking to the young man. The boy downed his drink, hesitated for a moment, then strolled across the crowded floor to take the empty stool

"My name is Piers," the young man said

"Mine's Jeremy," the member said

"A gentle name," said Piers "I've always liked the name Jeremy."

"Would you care for a drink?"

"A dry Martini, please," said Piers

The member ordered a dry Martini and another malt whisky The waiter hurried away "I haven't seen you here before "

"No, it's only my second time," said Piers "I used to live in Soho, but it's got to be so rough lately, you never know what you might end up with "

The drinks arrived and the member took a quick gulp

"Would you like to dance?" asked Piers

"It's an emergency," the voice said "Is the tape on?"

"I'm listening "

"Antarctic is in Dijon and he's discovered what's in the icon "

"And did he give them any clue?"

"No, all he told Pemberton was that he was in possession of a piece of property so valuable that no amount of money they could offer would be sufficient to purchase it back "

"Indeed," said the voice

"The British think the important word is property," said the caller

"They're wrong," said the voice on the other end of the line "It's purchase "

"How can you be so sure?"

"Because the Russian Ambassador in Washington has requested a meeting with the Secretary of State on June 20 and he's bringing with him a bullion order to the value of 720 million dollars in gold "

"So where does that leave us?"

"On our way to Dijon so that we can be sure to lay our hands on that icon before the British or the Russians The Russians obviously feel confident that it will soon be in their possession, so my bet is that they must already be on the way "

"But I've already agreed to go along with the British plan "

"Try not to forget which side you're on, Commander "

"Yes, sir. But what are we going to do about Antarctic if we get our hands on the icon?"

"It's only the icon we're after Once that's in our possession, Antarctic is expendable "

Adam checked his watch a few minutes after seven

It was time for him to leave because he had decided not to carry out Lawrence's instructions to the letter *He* intended to be waiting for *them*, and not as Lawrence had planned He locked the bedroom door and returned to reception where he paid for the use of the room and the telephone calls he had made

"Thank you," he said to the receptionist, and turned to leave.

"Dudley " Adam froze on the spot

"Dudley," the voice boomed again "I almost didn't recognise you. Did you change your mind?" A hand thumped him on the shoulder – at least it wasn't the left shoulder, he thought – as he stared down at Jim Hardcastle

"No," said Adam, wishing he possessed the guile of Robin's [illegible] think I was spotted in town so I had to get a change [illegible] and keep out of sight for a few hours "

The Auxerre road," said Adam, looking down at the piece aper on which he had written the directions Lawrence had d over the phone to him

inda set off at a slow pace, seeming at first to be unsure of car, but once they had reached the outskirts of the town am suggested that she might go a little faster

"I'm very nervous," she said, as she put her hand on Adam's e

"Yes, I can tell you are," said Adam, crossing his legs ickly "Don't miss the turning," he added when he noticed

[illegible]

[illegible] Young Conservatives

"But your mother will be worried about you"

"Dudley, you're so up-tight"

"I wouldn't be in normal circumstances but if you stay uch longer your life could be in danger," Adam said quietly

Linda turned ashen "You're not joking, are you?"

"I wish I was," said Adam "Now, when I get out of this ar you must turn round and go back to the hotel and never ention this [illegible]

"I [illegible]

"Y [illegible]

rms [illegible]

experienced. Adam then got out of the car and watched her lo a five-point turn before she headed off back in the direction [illegible] ion,

[illegible]

[illegible] they were [illegible] and by [illegible] would be [illegible] [illegible] on the airfield and [illegible] of the hangars [illegible] [illegible] the [illegible] It was [illegible] [illegible] It was like a ghost town and [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] could be there yet as they [illegible] had enough time to carry out Lawson's plan

Looking across the runways, Allan turned to [illegible] to hate while he waited to see which of the two [illegible] purposed would prove necessary

Flight Lieutenant Alan Banks was thankful the [illegible] shone so brightly that night. He had landed the [illegible] full of combat men in far worse road [illegible] when [illegible] been lit up like the Blackpool seafront

Banks circled the perimeter of the airfield once [illegible] the two runways carefully. The airport had been [illegible] for such a long time that none of the aircraft manuals [illegible] a detailed ground plan

The flight lieutenant was breaking every rule in the [illegible] including piloting an unmarked aircraft informing the [illegible] that they would be landing in Paris, not easy to [illegible] overshooting an airport by over a hundred miles

"I can make a landing on the north–south runway [illegible] easily," Banks said, turning to the SAS captain, who [illegible] crouched in the back with his five men. "How near to [illegible] hangar do you want me to go?" he said, pointing out of [illegible] window

"Stay well clear, at least a couple of hundred yards," [illegible] back the reply. "We still don't know what to expect."

The six SAS men continued to stare cautiously [illegible] the side windows. They had been briefed to pick up a Englishman called Scott who would be waiting for them, [illegible] then get out fast. It sounded [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible]

the ones his father used to fly during the Second World r But this one had obviously never made it home He cended confidently and as the little plane touched down it nced along not because the pilot lacked experience but ause the surface of the runway was so badly pitted

Flight Lieutenant Banks brought the plane to a halt about hundred yards from the hangar and swung the fuselage nd a full circle ready for that quick getaway the captain med so keen to execute He pressed the button that cut the pellers' engines and turned the lights out The whirring wed to an eerie whisper They were forty-three minutes rly

Adam watched the new arrivals suspiciously from the cock- of the Spitfire some four hundred yards away He wasn't ing to make a run for it across that open ground while the oon shone so brightly His eyes never left the little unmarked ane as he waited for some clue as to who the occupants might He estimated it would be another fifteen minutes before e moon would be shielded by clouds A few minutes more ssed before Adam watched six men drop out of the blind de of the aircraft and lie flat on the tarmac on their stomachs hey were correctly dressed in SAS battle kit but Adam mained unconvinced while he still recalled Romanov's chauf- ur's uniform The six soldiers made no attempt to move either did Adam as he was still uncertain which side they ere on.

All six men on the ground hated the moon and even more he open space The captain checked his watch thirty-six inutes to go He raised his hand and they began to crawl owards the hangar where Pemberton had said Scott would e waiting, a journey which took them nearly twenty minutes, nd with each movement they made they became more confi- lent that Pemberton's warning of an enemy waiting for them as unjustifi.

reached the moon and a shadow airfield The SAS captain quickly minutes to go before the rendezvous to of the hangar and

ned it open with the palm of his hand He wriggled in
h the gap The bullet hit him in the forehead even before
found time to raise his gun
ove, laddies," shouted the second in command, and the
four were up in a flash, firing in an arc in front of them
unning for the protection of the building
soon as Adam heard the Scottish brogue, he jumped ou
e cockpit and sprinted across the tarmac towards the litt
e whose propellers were already beginning to turn H
ped on the wing and climbed in by the side of the surprise
t
"I'm Adam Scott, the man you've come to pick up,"
outed
"I'm Flight Lieutenant Alan Banks, old chap," said
lot, thrusting out his hand Only a British officer could sh
nds in such a situation, thought Adam, relieved if
rrified
They both turned and watched the battle
"We ought to get going," said the pilot "My orders a
ee you are brought back to England in one piece"
"Not before we are certain none of your men can make it
back to the plane"
"Sorry, mate My instructions are to get you out Their
orders are to take care of themselves
"Let's at least give them another minute," Adam said
They waited until the propellers were rotating at full speed
Suddenly the firing stopped and Adam could hear his heart
thumping in his body
"We ought to get moving said the pilot
"I know," replied Adam, but keep your eyes skinned
There's something I still need to know"
Years of night marches made it possible for Adam to see hi
long before the pilot
"Get going," said Adam
"What" said the pilot
"Get going"
The pilot moved the joystick forward and the plane started
moving slowly d the runway

Suddenly a dark figure was running towards them firing long bursts straight at them The pilot looked back to see a tall man whose fair hair shone in the moonlight.

"Faster, man, faster," said Adam.

"The throttle's full out," said the pilot, as the firing began again, but this time the bullets were ripping into the fuselage. A third burst came but by then the plane was going faster than the man and Adam let out a scream of delight when it left the ground

He looked back to see that Romanov had turned around and was now firing at someone who was not wearing an SAS uniform

"They couldn't hope to hit us now unless they've got a bazooka," said Flight Lieutenant Banks

"Well done, well done," said Adam turning back to the pilot

"And to think my wife had wanted me to go to the cinema tonight," said the pilot laughing

"And what were you hoping to see?" asked Adam

"*My Fair Lady* "

removing

"And I'll pick up my coat and scarf," said Piers "Join you upstairs in a few moments?"

"Fine," he said Catching the eye of the proprietor the member scribbled his signature in the air When the 'account' appeared – a bare figure written out on a slip of paper without explanation – it was, as always, extortionate As always, the member paid without comment He thanked the proprietor as he left and walked up the dusty, creaky stairs to find his companion already waiting for him on the pavement He hailed a taxi and while Piers climbed in the back he directed the cabbie to Dillon's bookshop

"Not in the cab," he said, as his new friend's hand began to creep up his leg

"I can't wait," said Piers "It's way past my bedtime "

"Way past my bedtime," his companion repeated involuntarily, and checked his watch The die must have been cast They would have moved in by now surely they had caught Scott this time and, more important, the ?

"Four bob," said the cabbie, flicking back the glass He handed over five shillings and didn't wait for any change

"Just around the corner," he said, guiding Piers past the bookshop and into the little side street They crept down the stone steps and Piers waited as he unlocked the door, switched on the lights, and led the young man in

"Oh, very cosy," said Piers "Very cosy indeed"

Flight Lieutenant Alan Banks stared out of his tiny window as the plane climbed steadily

"Where to now?" said Adam, relief flooding through hi body

"I had hoped England but I'm afraid the answer is as f as I can manage"

"What do you mean?" said Adam anxiously

"Look at the fuel gauge," said Alan Banks, putting his forefinger on a little white indicator that was pointing half way between a quarter full and empty "We had enough to get us back to Northolt in Middlesex until those bullets ripped into my fuel tank"

The little white stick kept moving towards the red patch even as Adam watched it and within moments the propeller on the left side of the aircraft spun to a halt

"I am going to have to put her down in a field I can't risk going on as there are no other airports anywhere nearby Jus be thankful it's a clear moonlit night"

Without warning the plane began to descend sharply "I all try for that field over there," said the flight lieutenant, unding remarkably blasé as he pointed to a large expanse o nd to the west of the aircraft "Hold on tight," he said s e plane spiralled in[illegible] down The large expanse of lan suddenly lon plane began to approach

Adam e side of his seat and gritti

his tee

"Relax," said the pilot "These Beavers have landed on far worse places than this," he went on, as the wheels touched the brown earth "Damn mud I hadn't anticipated that," he cursed as the wheels lost their grip in the soft earth and the plane suddenly nosedived forward A few seconds passed before Adam realised he was still alive but upside down swinging from his seat belt

"What do I do next?" he asked the pilot but there was no reply

Adam tried to get his bearings and began to rock his body backwards and forwards until he could touch the side of the plane with one hand while gripping the joystick with his feet Once he was able to grab the side of the fuselage he undid the belt and collapsed onto the roof of the plane

He picked himself up, relieved to find nothing was broken He quickly looked around but there was still no sign of the pilot Adam clambered out of the plane, glad to feel the safety of the ground He scrambled around for a considerable time before he found Alan Banks some thirty yards in front of the aircraft motionless on his back

"Are you all right?" asked the pilot before Adam could ask the same question

"I'm fine, but how about you, Alan?"

"I'm OK I must have been thrown clear of the aircraft Just sorry about the landing, old chap, have to admit it wasn't up to scratch. We must try it again some time "

Adam burst out laughing as the pilot slowly sat up

"What next?" Banks asked

"Can you walk?"

"Yes, I think so," said Alan, gingerly lifting himself up "Damn," he said, "it's only my ankle but it's sure going to slow me down. You'd better get going without me That bunch back there with the arsenal can only be about thirty minutes behind us "

[illegible]

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"But what will you do?"

"My father landed in one of these bloody fields during the Second World War and still managed to get himself back to England without being caught by the Germans I owe you a

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satisfaction in having tricked the Americans into turning their fire on the British while he and Valchek waited to pick off the survivors The last survivor was an American who fired at Valchek continually as they were making their getaway

Romanov reckoned he had a clear hour before the French British and Americans would be explaining away several bodies on a disused airfield Romanov's thoughts returned to Valchek when he heard his comrade groan

"Let's turn off into this forest," he begged "I cannot hope to last much longer now "

"Hold on, Comrade, hold on," repeated Romanov "We can't be far away from Scott Think of the Motherland "

"To hell with the Motherland," said Valchek "Just let me die in peace " Romanov looked across again and realised that he could be stuck with a dead body within a few minutes Despite Valchek's efforts the blood was now seeping on to the floor like a tap that wouldn't stop dripping

Romanov noticed a gap in the trees ahead of him He switched his lights on to full beam and swung off the road on to a dirt track and drove as far as he could until the thicket became too dense He switched off the headlights and ran round the car to open the door

Valchek could only manage two or three steps before he slumped to the ground, still holding on to his intestines Romanov bent down and helped him ease himself up against the trunk of a large tree

"Leave me to die, Comrade Major Do not waste any more of your time on me "

Romanov frowned

"How do you wish to die, Comrade?" he asked "Slowly and in agony, or quickly and peacefully?"

"Leave me, Comrade Let me die slowly, but you should go while you still have Scott in your sights "

"But if the Americans were to find you, they might force you to talk "

"You know better than that, Comrade " Romanov accepted the rebuke, then rose and after a moment's thought, ran back to the car,

CHAPTER SIXTEEN

Adam lay flat on his stomach in the bottom of the empty [illegible]

hundred Swiss francs for a second time It was more than he could normally hope to earn in a month A woman standing on uptoes was eyeing the notes happily over his shoulder

The barge progressed at a stately pace down the canal and Adam could no longer see the crashed plane

Suddenly, far off in the distance, he heard distinctly the report of what sounded like a gunshot Even as he listened the woman turned and scuttled down the hatch like a frightened rat The barge ploughed its course on slowly through the night while Adam listened anxiously for any other unnatural noises, but all he could hear was the gentle splash of the water against the barge's hull The clouds had moved on and full moon once again lit up the bank on both sides of the river It became abundantly clear to Adam as he watched the towpath that they were not moving very fast He could have run quicker But even if it had cost him the remainder of his money, he was grateful to be escaping He lowered himself again and curled up in the bow of the boat He touched the icon, something he found himself doing every few minutes since he had discovered its secret. He did not move for another half hour, although he doubted that the barge had covered more than five miles

Although everything appeared absolutely serene, he still remained alert The river was far wider now than when he had first leapt on the barge

The bargee's eyes never left him for long He stood gripping

And if we're not, who is?" asked Sir Morris "Because
eone was so desperate to discover our next move that they
t have taken one hell of a risk during the last twenty-four
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Americans would go without keeping us informed "

"So it was you who told Busch," said Lawrence

"No," said Sir Morris "You don't end up sitting behind
s desk risking your own skin I told the Prime Minister, and
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e Prime Minister would tell the President Otherwise I
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"Yes, I do," said Lawrence "I have every reason to believe
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as Scott. The French police, who incidentally have been far
ore co-operative than the Swiss, have informed us that our
ane crashed in a field twelve miles north of Dijon but
either Scott nor the pilot were to be found at the scene of the
rash "

"And if the French reports on what took place at the airport
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nust have had a couple of hours' start on us "

"Possibly," said Lawrence

"And do you think it equally possible," asked Sir Morris,
"that they have caught up with Scott and are now in possession
of the icon?"

"Yes, sir, I fear that is quite possible," Lawrence said "But
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the wheel his oil smeared face not much cleaner than the old dungarees he wore which he kept as if they were never taken off Occasionally he took a hand from the wheel, but only to remove the smokeless pipe from his mouth, cough, spit and put it back again

The man smiled, took both hands off the wheel and placed them by the side of his head to indicate that Adam should sleep But Adam shook his head He checked his watch Midnight had passed and he wanted to be off the barge and away long before first light

He stood up stretched and wobbled a little His shoulder, although healing slowly, still ached relentlessly He walked up the centre of the barge and took his place next to the wheel

"La Seine?" he asked, pointing at the water

The bargee shook his head, no "Canal de Bourgogne," he grunted

Adam then pointed in the direction they were moving "*Quelle ville?*"

The bargee removed his pipe "*Ville? Ce n'est pas une ville, c'est Sombernon,*" he said, and put the stem back between his teeth

Adam returned to his place in the bow He tried to find a more comfortable position to relax and, curling up against the side of the boat, rested his head on some old rope and allowed his eyes to close

'You know Scott better than any of us," said Sir Morris, "and you still have no feel as to where he might be now, or what he might do next, do you?"

"No, sir," admitted Lawrence "The only thing we know for certain is that he has an appointment for a medical on Monday afternoon, but somehow I don't think he'll make it"

Sir Morris ignored the comment "But someone was able to get to Scott, even though we didn't call D4," he continued "That scoi

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thud and knocked the breath out of his body despite the fact that the water only came up to his waist.

Adam stood in the canal, the icon still held high above his head as the barge sailed past him He waded to the nearest bank and clambered up on to the towpath, turning slowly round as he tried to get some feel for direction He was soon [illegible]

Whenever he came to a hedge or gate he climbed over or under like a Roman centurion determined to hold a straight [illegible]

path led up to a half-open wooden door that looked as if it didn't need a lock Adam tapped gently on the knocker and stood directly below the light above the doorway so that whoever answered would see him immediately

The door was pulled back by a woman of perhaps thirty, who wore a plain black dress and a spotless white apron Her rosy cheeks and ample waist confirmed her husband's profession

When she saw Adam standing under the light she couldn't mask her surprise – she had been expecting the postman, but he didn't often appear in a neat navy blue blazer and soaking grey trousers

Adam smiled "*Anglais*," he told her, and added, "I fell in the canal "

The lady burst out laughing and beckoned Adam into her kitchen. He walked in to find a man evidently dressed for milking The farmer looked up and when he saw Adam he joined in the laughter – a warm, friendly laugh more with Adam than against him When the woman saw that Adam was dripping all over her spotless floor she quickly pulled

service at Caversham Park picked up extra e-mails [illegible] all Soviet embassies during the night."

'That could mean anything,' said Sir Morris, [illegible] spectacles.

'I agree, sir. But NATO reports that Russian [illegible] forces have been placed at a state of readiness and [illegible] Soviet Ambassadors across Europe have requested [illegible] audiences with their Foreign Secretaries, ours included.'

'That is more worrying,' said Sir Morris. 'They don't [illegible] that unless they are hoping for our support.'

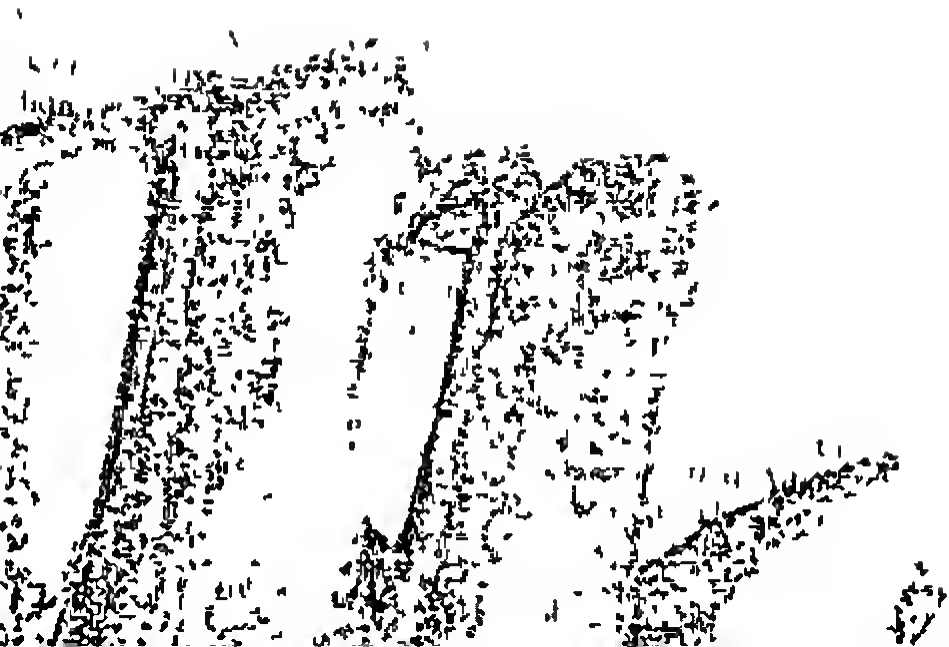
'Agreed, sir. But most revealing of all is that the Active Measures section of the KGB, First Chief Directorate, [illegible] space in newspapers right acro[illegible]

[illegible] Walter Thorpe [illegible] to write the copy,' growled Sir Morris.

'They won't need them,' said Lawrence. 'I suspect it's [illegible] story that will make every front page.'

If it hadn't been for the ceaseless throbbing in his shoulder, Adam might not have woken so quickly. The barge had suddenly swung at 90° and started heading east when Adam woke up with a start. He looked at the bargee and indicated that as the river was far wider now could he ease them nearer to the bank so he could jump off. The old man shrugged his shoulders pretending not to understand as the barge drifted aimlessly on.

Adam looked over the side and despite the lateness of the hour could see the bed of the river quite clearly. He tossed a stone over the side and watched it drop quickly to the bottom. [illegible] and touch it. He



drawn a towel from the rack above the fire and said,
"pointing to Adam's trousers
Adam turned towards the farmer for guidance b
only nodded his agreement and added with a mume
down his own trousers
"*Enlevez les, enlevez-les,*" the woman repeated, poi
him, and handed him the towel
Adam removed his shoes and socks but the farmer'
went on pointing until he took off his trousers, and she
budge before he had finally removed his shirt and underc
and wrapped the towel around his waist. She stared
large bandage on his shoulder but then quickly pick
everything except his blazer and took them over to the
while he stood by the fire and dried himself
Adam hitched up the towel around his waist, as the far
beckoned him to join him at the table, pouring a large
of milk for his guest and another for himself Adam sat d
next to the farmer, hanging his fashionable new blazer
the back of the chair near the fire A delicious aroma
from the pan where the farmer's wife was frying a thick
of bacon which she had cut from the joint hanging
smoky recess of the chimney
The farmer raised his glass of milk high in the air
"Winston Churchill," he toasted Adam took a long
from his own glass and then raised it dramatically
"Charles de Gaulle," he said, and finished off the
milk as if it had been his first pint at the local pub
The farmer picked up the jug once more and refilled the
glasses "*Merci,*" said Adam, turning to the farmer's wife
she placed in front of him a large plate sizzling with eggs
bacon She nodded and handed Adam a knife and fork befo
saying, "*Mangez*"
"*Merci, merci,*" Adam repeated, as she cut him a thick
slice from the huge loaf in front of him
Adam began to devour the freshly cooked food which
the first meal he'd managed since the dinner he'd ordered
Robin's expense
Without warning the farmer suddenly rose from his plac

nd thrust out his hand Adam also got up and shook it
ratefully, only to be reminded how sore his shoulder still was

"*Je dois travailler à la lanterne,*" he explained

Adam nodded, and remained standing as his host left
he room, but the farmer waved him down with a further,
'*Mangez*"

When Adam had finished the last scrap of food – he did

and began to sip at it.

Adam tapped the jacket pocket almost automatically to
make sure the icon was still safely in place He pulled it out
and studied St George and the Dragon He turned it over,
hesitated and then pressed the silver crown hard The icon
plit in half like a book revealing two tiny hinges on the inside

He glanced up at the farmer's wife, who was now wringing
ut his socks Adam noticed his pants had already joined the
rousers on the rack above the fire She removed an ironing
oard from a little alcove by the side of the stove and began
o set it up, showing no interest in Adam's discovery

Once again he stared down at the inside of the open icon
which was now laid flat on the table in front of him The true
rony was that the woman pressing his trousers was able to
nderstand every word on the parchment while at the same
time unable to explain the full significance to him The com-
plete surface of the inside of the icon was covered by a parch-
ment which was glued to the wood and fell only a centimetre
short of the four edges Adam swivelled it round so that he
could study it more clearly The scrawled signatures in black
ink at the bottom and the seals gave it the look of a legal
document On each reading he learned something new Adam
had been surprised originally to discover it was written in
French until he came to the date on the bottom – June 20
1867 – and then he remembered from his military histor
lectures at Sandhurst that long after Napoleonic times most
international agreements remained conducted in French
Adam began to reread the script again slowly

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efully, only to be reminded how sore his shoulder still was
Je dois travailler à la lanterne," he explained
Adam nodded, and remained standing as his host left
room, but the farmer waved him down with a further,
anges"
When Adam had finished the last scrap of food – he did
rything except lick the plate – he took it over to the farmer's
e who was busy removing a pot from the stove in order to
ar him a large, steaming cup of hot coffee He sat back down
d began to sip at it
Adam tapped the jacket pocket almost automatically to
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[illegible]
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international agreements *remained conducted in French*
Adam began to reread the script again slowly

l thrust out his hand Adam also got up and shook it
tefully, only to be reminded how sore his shoulder still was.
"*Je dois travailler à la laiterie,*" he explained
Adam nodded, and remained standing as his host left
: room, but the farmer waved him down with a further,
fangez"
When Adam had finished the last scrap of food – he did
erything except lick the plate – he took it over to the farmer's
fe who was busy removing a pot from the stove in order to
ur him a large, steaming cup of hot coffee He sat back down

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oard from a little alcove by the side of the stove and began
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French until he came to the date on the bottom – June 20,
1867 – and then he remembered from his military history
lectures at Sandhurst that long after Napoleonic times most
international agreements remained conducted in French.
Adam began to reread the script again slowly

His French was not good enough to translate more than a few odd words from the finely handwritten scroll. Under *Etas Unis* William Seward's bold hand was scrawled across a crest of a two-headed eagle Next to it was the signature of Edward de Stoeckle below a crown that mirrored the silver ornament embedded in the back of the icon Adam double-checked. I had to be some form of agreement executed between th Russians and the Americans in 1867

He then searched for other words that would help to explai the significance of the document On one line he identified '*Sept million deux cent mille dollars d'or (7 2 mille)*' and on anothe '*Sept cent dis huit million deux cent mille dollars d'or (718.2m) le 2 Jun, 1966*'

His eyes rested on a calendar hanging by a nail from the wall It was Friday, June 17, 1966 If the date in the agreement were to be believed, then in only three days the document would no longer have any legal validity No wonder the two most powerful nations on earth seemed desperate to get their hands on it, thought Adam

Adam read through the document line by line searching for any further clues, pondering over each word slowly

His eyes came to a halt on the one word that would remain the same in both languages

CHAPTER SEVENTEEN

THE WHITE HOUSE WASHINGTON DC *June 17, 1966*

"I don't want to be the first god-damn President in the history of the United States to hand back an American state rather than be founding one "

"I appreciate that, Mr President," said the Secretary of State "But . . ."

"Where do we stand on this legally, Dean?"

"We don't, Mr President. Abraham Brunweld, the leading authority on documents of this period, confirms that the terms of the ninety-nine-year lease are binding on both sides. The lease was signed on behalf of Russia by Edward de Stoeckle, and for the US by the then Secretary of State, William Seward "

"Can this agreement still be valid today?" asked the President, turning to his chief legal officer, Nicholas Katzenbach.

"It certainly can, sir," said the Attorney General "But only if they can produce their original If they do, the UN and the international court at The Hague would have no choice but to support the Russian claim. Otherwise no international agreement signed by us in the past or in the future would carry any credibility "

"What you're asking me to do is be down and wag my tail like a prize labrador while the Russians shit all over us," said the President.

"I understand how you feel, Mr President," said the

Attorney General, "but it remains my responsibility to mak
you aware of the legal position "

"God dammit, is there a precedent for this kind of stupidit
by a Head of State?"

"The British," chipped in Dean Rusk, "will be facing
similar problem with the Chinese in 1999 over the New Terri
ries of Hong Kong They have already accepted the reality
the situation and indeed have made it clear to the Chine
Government that they are willing to come to an agreeme
with them "

"That's just one example," said the President, "and we
know about the British and their 'fair play' diplomacy "

"Also, in 1898," continued Rusk, "the Russians obtained
ninety-nine-year lease on Port Arthur in Northern China Th
port was vital to them because, unlike Vladivostok, it is ice fr
all year round "

"I had no idea the Russians *had* a port in China "

"They don't any longer, Mr President They returned it
Mao in 1955, as an act of goodwill between fellow Comm
nists "

Y [illegible]

Secretary [illegible]

the first place?"

"At the time," said the Attorney General, removing h
spectacles, "the purchase price of the land in question wa
seven point two million dollars and inflation was then virtuall
unheard of Andrew Johnson could never have imagined th
Russians w [illegible] ting to purchase it back at ninety-nin [illegible] times it
origina [illegible] seven hundred and twelv
point [illegible] ion [illegible] ity, years o
inflati [illegible] Russian

have already lodged the full amount in a New York bank to prove it"

"So we can't even hope that they won't stump up in time," said the President

"It would seem not, sir"

"But why did Tsar Alexander want to lease the damn land in the first place? That's what beats me"

"He was having trouble with some of his senior ministers at the time over the selling off of land belonging to Russia in Eastern Asia The Tsar thought this transaction would be more palatable to his inner circle if he presented it as nothing more than a long lease, with a buy-back clause, rather than an outright sale"

"Why didn't Congress object?"

"After Congress ratified the main treaty, the amendment was not strictly subject to approval by the House, because no further expenditure by the United States government was involved," Rusk explained "Ironically, Seward was proud of the fact he had demanded such a high premium in the repayment clause At the time he had every reason to believe it would be impossible to repay"

"Now it's worth that in annual oil revenue alone," said the President, looking out of the Oval Office window towards the Washington Monument "Not to mention the military chaos it's going to create in this country if they've got their hands on their copy of the treaty Don't ever forget that I was the President who asked Congress to spend billions of dollars putting the early warning system right across that border so the American people could sleep easy"

Neither adviser felt able to contradict their elected leader

"So what are the British doing about all this?"

"Playing it close to the chest, as usual, Mr President It's an English national who is thought to be in possession of the treaty at the moment and they still seem quietly confident that they will get their hands on him and the icon before the Russians, so they may yet turn out to be our saviours"

"Nice to have the British coming to *our* rescue for a change," said the President. "But have we meanwhile been sitting on

our asses while they try to solve our problems for us?"

"No, sir. The CIA have been on it for over a month."

"Then it's only surprising that the Russians haven't got their hands on the icon already."

Nobody laughed.

"So what am I expected to do next? Sit and wait for the Soviets to move 712 million dollars of gold from their New York bank to the US Treasury before midnight on Monday?"

"They must also deliver their original copy of the agreement to me at the same time," said Rusk. "And they have only sixty hours left to do that."

"Where's our copy, at this moment?" asked the President.

"Somewhere deep in the vaults of the Pentagon. Only two people know the exact location. Since the Yalta conference, our copy of the treaty has never seen the light of day."

"Why have I never been told about it before today?" asked the President. "At least I could have put a stop to so much expenditure."

"For over fifty years, we've believed the Russians' copy was destroyed at the time of the Revolution. As the years passed it became clear that the Soviets accepted this as a *fait accompli* with the final acknowledgment of this fact coming from Stalin at Yalta. Brezhnev must have come across something within the last month that convinced him that their copy had only been mislaid."

"Christ, another month and we would have had a home run."

"That is correct, sir," said the Secretary of State.

"Do you realise, Dean, that if the Russians turn up at your office before midnight on Monday with their copy, all I'll be able to do will be so much piss in a thunderstorm?"

CHAPTER EIGHTEEN

When the cottage door closed behind Adam, all he could make out was the outskirts of a small town While it was still so early he felt safe to jog towards the '*centre ville*', but as soon as the early-morning workers began to appear on the streets, he slowed to a walk Adam opted not to go straight into the centre of the town but to look for somewhere to hide while he considered his next move He came to a halt outside a multi-storey car park and decided he was unlikely to find a better place to formulate a plan.

Adam walked through an exit door at ground level and came to a lift that indicated that the car park was on four floors He ran down the steps to the lowest level, tentatively pulled back the door to the basement, and found it was badly lit and almost empty Adam had chosen the basement as he assumed that it would be the last floor to fill up with customers He walked around the perimeter of the floor and studied the layout Two cars were parked in the far corner, and a thick layer of dust suggested that they had been there for some time. He crouched down behind one of them and found that he was safely out of sight to all but the most inquisitive

He began to fantasise that someone might park a car on that floor and leave the keys in the ignition He checked the doors of the two cars already parked but both were securely locked He settled back to work out a more serious plan of how he could reach the coast by nightfall

He was deep in thought when he heard a scraping noise that made him jump He peered round the gloomy basement, and out of the darkness a man appeared pulling behind him a plastic dustbin half full of rubbish. Adam could barely see

the old man dressed in a dirty brown coat that stretched
to the ground and left little doubt about the height of
previous employer He wasn't sure what he would do if
man continued to walk towards him But as he came
Adam could see that he was stooped and old, the stub of
cigarette protruded from his lips. The cleaner stopped
of him, spotted a cigarette packet, picked it up and checked
to be sure it was empty before dropping it in the dustbin
that, a sweet paper, a Pepsi-Cola can and an old copy of
Figaro all found their way into the dustbin His eyes searched
slowly round the room for more rubbish, but still he didn't
notice Adam tucked away behind the farthest car Satisfied
that his task was completed, he dragged the dustbin across the
floor and pushed it outside the door Adam began to relax
again but after about two minutes, the old man returned
walked over to a wall and pulled open a door that Adam
hadn't previously noticed He took off the long brown coat
and replaced it with a grey one that didn't look in a much
better state but at least it made a more convincing fit He then
disappeared through the exit Moments later Adam heard a
door close with a bang

The cleaner had ended his day

Adam waited for some time before he stood up and stretched
He crept around the edge of the wall until he reached the little
door He pulled it open quietly and removed the long brown
coat from its nail, then headed back to his place in the corner
He ducked down as the first of the morning cars arrived The
driver swung into the far corner in such a fluent circle that
m felt sure it must have been a daily routine A short
r man with a pencil moustache, dressed in a smart
ipe suit, jumped out of the car carrying a briefcase
he had locked the car door he proceeded with fast
strides towards the exit Adam waited until the heavy
place before he stood up and tried on
is blazer It was tight on the shoulders
arm, but at least it made him look as

1

w

arrive at irregular intervals Tiresomely, all the owners care-
fully locked their doors and checked them before disappearing
through the exit with their keys

When he heard ten o'clock strike in the distance Adam
decided that there was nothing to be gained by hanging around
any longer He had crept out from behind the car that was
shielding him and began to make his way across the floor
towards the exit when a Rover with English registration plates
swung round the corner and nearly blinded him He jumped
to one side to let the car pass but it screeched to a halt beside
him and the driver wound down his window

"All – right - park – here?" the driver asked, emphasising
each word in an English accent

"*Oui, monsieur,*" said Adam

"Other – floors – marked – *prive*," the man continued, as
addressing a complete moron "Anywhere?" His arm swep
round the floor

"*Oui*," repeated Adam, "bert ay merst paak you," he added
fearing he sounded too much like Peter Sellers

Balls, was what Adam expected to hear him reply 'Fine,'
was what the man actually said He got out of the car, an
handed Adam his keys and a ten franc note

"*Merci*," said Adam, pocketing the note and touching hi
forehead with his hand "*Quelle – heure – vous – returnez?*" h
asked playing the man at his own game

"One hour at most," said the man as he reached the doo
Adam waited by the car for a few minutes but the man di
not come back He opened the passenger door and droppe
the food bag on the front seat He then walked round to th
side and climbed in the driver's seat, switched on th
n and checked the fuel gauge a little over half full H
d drove the car up the ramp until h
r, where he came to a halt unable
piece to make the arm swin
lady in the car behind him reluctantl
ote once she realised there was no othe
out on to the road looking for the sig

minutes before he was clear of the town and travelli
N6 to Paris

Adam estimated that he had two hours at best. By
police would surely have been informed of the theft o
He felt confident he had enough petrol to reach Par
certainly couldn't hope to make Calais

He remained in the centre lane of the N6 for mo
journey, always keeping the speedometer five kilometr
the limit By the end of the first hour Adam had covere
ninety kilometres He opened the bag the farmer's w
given him and took out an apple and a piece of che
mind began to drift to Heidi, as it had so often in the p
days

If only he had never opened the letter

Another hour passed before he spotted him limping u
only a few hundred yards from the main road A broa
came over Romanov's face when he realised he could
Scott long before he could hope to reach the road
Romanov was within a few yards of him the flight heu
turned round and smiled at the stranger

When Romanov left Banks thirty minutes later h
behind a tree with a broken neck he reluctantly admitte
the young pilot officer had been as brave as Valchek – b
couldn't waste any more time trying to discover in t
direction Scott was heading

Romanov headed west

The moment Adam heard the siren he came out of his re
He checked the little clock on the dashboard He had
been driving for about an hour and a half Could the Fr
police be that efficient? The police car was now approac
him fast on his left but Adam maintained the same spe
except for his heartbeat, which climbed well above the
proved limit – until the police car shot past him

balance, to risk pushing on to Paris as quickly as possible.

He remained alert for further sirens as he continued to follow the signs to Paris. When he finally reached the outskirts of the city, he proceeded to the Boulevard de l'Hôpital and even felt relaxed enough to bite into another apple In normal circumstances he would have appreciated the magnificent architecture along the banks of the Seine, but today his eyes kept returning to the rear view mirror

Adam decided he would abandon the vehicle in a large public car park with any luck it could be days before anyone came across it

He turned down the Rue de Rivoli and took in at once the long colourful banners looming up in front of him He could hardly have picked a better place, as he felt sure it would be packed with foreign cars

Adam backed the Rover in the farthest corner of the square He then wolfed down the last piece of cheese, and locked the car He started walking towards the exit, but had only gone a few yards when he realised that the strolling holidaymakers were amused by his ill-fitting brown jacket which he had completely forgotten He decided to turn back and throw the coat in the boot He quickly took it off and folded it in a small square

He was only a few yards away from the car when he saw the young policeman He was checking the Rover's number plate and repeating the letters and numbers into an intercom Adam inched slowly back, never taking his eyes from the officer He only needed to manage another six or seven paces before he would be lost in the throng of the crowd.

Five, four, three, two, he backed, as the man continued speaking into the intercom Just one more pace "*Alors!*" hollered the lady on whose foot Adam stepped

"I'm so sorry," said Adam, instinctively in his native language The policeman immediately looked up and stared at Adam, then shouted something into the intercom and began running towards him

Adam dropped the brown coat and swung round quickly, nearly knocking the stooping lady over before sprinting off

Adam came to a halt in the middle of the Icon Room at the Louvre, his hands raised above his head He was surrounded by policemen, their guns drawn

CHAPTER NINETEEN

Sir Morris picked up the phone on his desk

"An urgent call from Paris, sir," said his secretary

"Thank you, Tessa." He listened carefully as his brain quickly translated the exciting news

"*Merci, merci,*" said Sir Morris to his opposite number at the French Foreign Ministry "We will be back in touch with you as soon as we have made all the necessary arrangements to collect him But for now, please don't let him out of your sight" Sir Morris listened for a few moments before he said "And if he has any possessions on him, please keep them guarded under lock and key Thank you once again" His secretary took down every word of the conversation in shorthand – as she had done for the past seventeen years

Once the police had snapped the handcuffs on Adam and marched him off to a waiting car, he was surprised how relaxed, almost friendly, they became He was yanked into the back of the car by the policeman to whom he was attached He noticed that there was a police car in front of him and yet another behind Two motorcycle outriders led the little motorcade away Adam felt more like visiting royalty than a criminal who was wanted for questioning for two murders, two car thefts and travelling under false identification Was it possible at last that someone had worked out he was innocent?

When Adam arrived at the Sûreté on the Ile de la Cité, he immediately ordered to empty all his pockets One wrist

vest and pants It was the second time that day Once Adam had done so, the inspector carefully checked every pocket of the blazer, even the lining His expression left Adam in no doubt he hadn't found what he was looking for

"Do you have anything else in your possession?" the officer asked in slow, precise English

Damn silly question thought Adam You can see for yourself "No," was all he replied The inspector checked the blazer once again but came across nothing new "You must be dressed," he said abruptly

Adam put back on his shirt, jacket and trousers but the inspector kept his tie and shoelaces

"All your things will be returned to you when you leave," the inspector explained Adam nodded as he slipped on his shoes, which flapped uncomfortably when he walked He was then accompanied to a small cell on the same floor, locked in and left alone. He looked around the sparsely furnished room A small wooden table was placed in it centre, with two wooden chairs on either side His eyes checked over a single bed in the corner which had on it an ancient horse-hair mattress. He could not have described the room properly as a cell because there were no bars, even across the one small window He took off his jacket, hung it over the chair and lay down on the bed At least it was an improvement over anything he had slept on for the past two nights, he reflected Could it have only been two nights since he had slept on the floor of Robin's hotel room in Geneva?

As the minutes ticked by, he made only one decision That when the inspector returned, he would demand to see a lawyer "What the hell's the French for lawyer?" he asked out loud

When an officer eventually appeared, in what Adam estimated must have been about half an hour, he was carrying a tray laden with hot soup, a roll, and what looked to Adam like a steak with all the trimmings and a plastic cup filled to the brim with red wine He wondered if they had got the wrong man, or if this was simply his last meal before the guillotine He followed the officer to the door

black Jaguar bearing CD plates had arrived at police headarter's a few minutes earlier than expected The traffic had been as heavy as the colonel had anticipated The inspector standing on the steps as Pollard jumped out of the car. he policeman looked at the flapping Union Jack on the onnet and considered the whole exercise was becoming rather elodramatic.

Pollard, a short, thickset man, dressed in a dark suit, regiental tie and carrying a rolled umbrella, looked like so many those Englishmen who refuse to acknowledge that they could ossibly be abroad

The inspector took Pollard directly through to the little oom where Adam had been incarcerated

"Pollard's the name, Colonel Pollard British Military ttaché stationed here in Paris Sorry you've been put through his ordeal, old fellow, but a lot of paperwork had to be ompleted to get you out Bloody red tape "

"I understand," said Adam, jumping off the bed and shaking he colonel by the hand "I was in the army myself"

"I know Royal Wessex, wasn't it?"

Adam nodded, feeling a little more confident

"Still, the problem's been sorted out now," continued the olonel. "The French police have been most co-operative and ave agreed to let you accompany me to our Embassy "

Adam looked at the colonel's tie "Duke of York's?"

"What? Certainly not," said Pollard, his hand fingering his hirt front "Green Jackets."

"Yes, of course," said Adam, pleased to have his mistake picked up

"Now I think we ought to be cutting along, old fellow, I know you'll be relieved to hear that they won't be laying any charges "

The colonel didn't know just how relieved Adam did feel

The inspector led them both back out into the hall where Adam had only to identify and sign for his personal belongings He put them all in his pocket, except for the watch, which he slipped over his wrist, and his shoelaces, which he quickly inserted and tied He wasn't surprised they didn't return Dudley Hulme's passport.

HAPTER TWENTY

n Adam awoke he was naked

e looked around the sparse room but this time unlike the ich jail he was unable to see what was behind him his s, legs and body were bound tightly by a nylon cord to a r that had been placed in the middle of the room, and ch made him all but immobile

Then he looked up from the chair all he could see was onel Pollard standing over him The moment the colonel satisfied that Adam had regained consciousness he quickly the room

dam turned his head to see all his clothes laid out neatly a bed at the far side of the cell He tried to manoeuvre the ir, but he could barely manage to make it wobble from side ide, and after several minutes had advanced only a few hes towards the door He switched his energies to trying to sen the cords around his wrists, rubbing them up and down inst the wood of the slats, but his arms were bound so

[illegible]

[illegible]

kid up as Romanov strode through He decided he was no s terrifying at close quarters He was followed by another in whom Adam didn't recognise The second man was itching what looked like a cigar box as he took his place *mewhere behind Adam* Pollard followed him, carrying a ge plastic sheet

Romanov looked at Adam's naked body and smiled, enjoyg his humiliation he came to a halt directly in front of the air

"Don't let's hang around too long, old fellow," colonel, beginning to sound a little anxious.

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"Back to the Embassy," said Pollard, and the car m briskly

Adam stared in horror at the flapping Union Jack

CHAPTER TWENTY

When Adam awoke he was naked

He looked around the sparse room but this time unlike the French jail he was unable to see what was behind him his arms, legs and body were bound tightly by a nylon cord to a chair that had been placed in the middle of the room, and which made him all but immobile

When he looked up from the chair all he could see was Colonel Pollard standing over him The moment the colonel was satisfied that Adam had regained consciousness he quickly left the room

Adam turned his head to see all his clothes laid out neatly on a bed at the far side of the cell He tried to manoeuvre the chair, but he could barely manage to make it wobble from side to side, and after several minutes had advanced only a few inches towards the door He switched his energies to trying to loosen the cords around his wrists, rubbing them up and down against the wood of the slats, but his arms were bound so tightly that he could only manage the slightest friction

After struggling ineffectively for several minutes he was interrupted by the sound of the door swinging open Adam looked up as Romanov strode through He decided he was no less terrifying at close quarters He was followed by another man whom Adam didn't recognise The second man was clutching what looked like a cigar box as he took his place somewhere behind Adam Pollard followed him, carrying a large plastic sheet

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ustake over the Union Jack was lax but as it is impossible
the Russian flag upside down without everyone noticing,
is perhaps understandable Although, in truth, Pollard
ld have spotted it immediately, we must be thankful that
did not until the car doors were safely locked
omanov stopped his endless circling and stared down at
nude body

[illegible]

native figure who seemed to be sizing him up Stavinsky
have been no taller than five feet and wore an open-
ked grey shirt and a badly creased grey suit that made him
emble a junior clerk in a not very successful solicitor's office

[illegible]

gan Stavinsky "Although you are an unexpected guest of
Embassy you are most welcome You could of course make
r association very short by simply letting me have one piece
[illegible] mall sigh – "I only
[illegible] Tsar's icon " He
[illegible] not going to be that

[illegible] warned Comrade
[illegible] tion of you a simple
[illegible] unlikely to suffice
[illegible] n such circum-
[illegible] by the book every
[illegible] ay have wondered,"
[illegible] thought, "why a man

dam was desperate to know what was in the box but his
remained impassive
With torture, as with making love, Captain Scott, foreplay
e all-important factor Are you following me, Captain?"
d Stavinsky
dam tried to remain relaxed and calm
Still no response, Captain Scott, but as I explained I am
o hurry Especially, as I suspect in your case, the whole
ration may take a little longer than usual, which I confess
only add to my enjoyment And although we are not yet
ossession of the Tsar's icon I *am* at least in control of the
person who knows where it is "
dam still made no comment
So I will ask you once and once only before I open the box
ere is the Tsar's icon?"
dam spat at Stavinsky
"Not only ill-mannered," remarked Stavinsky, "but also
pid. Because in a very short time you will be desperate for

necessary to add a few details about the nervous system. I do hope you are following my every word, Captain, because it is the victim's knowledge which allows him to appreciate the true genius of what is about to follow."

It didn't please Adam that Stavinsky spoke English so well. He could still vividly remember how the Chinese had told Adam what they were going to do to him in a language he couldn't understand. With them, he had found it easy to allow his mind to drift during their diatribe but he still ended up in a fridge for four hours.

"Now to the practical," continued the grey figure. "By sending a small electrical impulse to the end of the spinal cord it is possible to pass on a large electric message to thousands of other nerves within a fraction of a second. This causes a sensation not unlike touching a live wire when the electric power has been left on in one's home, more commonly known as an electric shock. Not deadly, but distinctly unpleasant. In the Moscow school this is known as Stage One and there is no necessity for you to experience this if you are now willing to tell me where I can find the Tsar's icon."

Adam remained impassive.

"I see you have not paid attention during my little lecture so I fear we will have to move from the theoretical to the practical."

Adam began reciting to himself the thirty-seven plays of Shakespeare. How his old English master would have been delighted to know that after all those years of drumming the complete Shakespearean canon into a reluctant student, Adam could still recall them at a moment's notice.

Henry VI part one, Henry VI part two, Henry VI part three, Richard II

Stavinsky picked up the tube of collodion glue, removed the cap and smeared two lumps of it on Adam's chest.

Comedy of Errors, Titus Andronicus, The Taming of the Shrew

The Russian attached the two electrodes to the glue, taken the wires back and screwing them to the six-volt battery, which in turn was connected to the tiny pulse generator.

"You give me no choice but to advance to Stage Two," said Stavinsky. He looked towards Romanov who nodded. Stavinsky's thin lips parted in another smile. "You may be wondered," he continued, "how much more harm I can do with a simple six-volt battery, and indeed having seen in numerous American gangster movies an execution by the electric chair you will know a large generator is needed to kill a man. But first it is important to remember that I don't want to kill you. Second, my science lessons didn't end at Stage One. Professor Metz's mind was also exercised by the feebleness of this stage and after a lifetime of dedicated research he came up with an ingenious solution known as 'M', which the Academy of Science named after him in his honour. If you inject M into the nervous system, messages can be transmitted to all your nerves many times more efficiently, thus allowing the pain to multiply without actually proving fatal.

"I only need to multiply a few milli-amps by a suitable factor to create a far more interesting effect – so I must ask you once again, where is the Tsar's icon?"

Much Ado About Nothing, Henry V, Julius Caesar

"I see you are determined that I should proceed," said Stavinsky, removing a syringe from the floor and jabbing the long thin needle into a phial before withdrawing the plunger until the barrel of the syringe was half full. Stavinsky held the needle in the air, pressed the knob and watched a little spray flow out like a tiny fountain. He moved behind Adam.

"I am now going to give you a lumbar puncture which if you attempt to move will paralyse you from the neck down for life. By nature I am not an honest man but on this occasion I [illegible] the

yes open, the unshaven man stopped pacing, smiled, walked
ver to the chair and ran his fingers slowly over the large piece
f sticking plaster that covered Adam's two-day-old shoulder
ound The touch appeared gentle, but to Adam it felt like a
ot iron being forced across his shoulder

"As I promised," said Stavinsky "A far more interesting
ensation is awaiting you And now I think I'll rip the plaster
I" He waited for a moment while Adam pursed his lips
hen, in one movement, he tore the plaster back Adam
reamed as if the bullet had hit him again Romanov came
rward, leaned over and studied the wound

"I'm relieved to see my colleague didn't miss you com-
etely," Romanov said before adding, "can you imagine what
will be like when I allow Mr Stavinsky to wire you up again
d then press the little generator?"

[illegible]

"[illegible] afford to let you choke to death, could we?" said
vinsky "We lost one or two that way in the early days but
know better now"

As soon as the sickness subsided, Stavinsky threw Adam
k up on to the chair and Pollard tied him up again.

"Where is the Tsar's icon?" shouted Stavinsky

We contacted your office immediately but as you were already en route the Ambassador ordered me straight to the airport while he phoned Sir Morris "

Lawrence staggered and nearly fell The colonel came quickly to his side He didn't understand what Lawrence meant when he said, "He's bound to believe it's me "

When Adam regained consciousness, Romanov stood alone

"Sometimes," said the Russian, continuing as if Adam had never passed out, "a man is too proud to show lack of resolution in front of the torturer or indeed one of his own countrymen, especially a traitor That is why I have removed Stavinsky and the colonel from our presence Now I have no desire to see Stavinsky continue his experiment to Stage Three, but I can stop him only if you will tell me where you have put the icon "

"Why should I?" said Adam belligerently "It's legally mine "

"Not so, Captain Scott What you picked up from the bank in Geneva is the priceless original painted by Rublev which belongs to the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics And if that icon were to appear in any auction house or gallery in the world, we would immediately claim it as a national treasure stolen by the seller "

"But how could that be ?" began Adam

"Because," said Romanov, "it is you who are now in possession of the original that the Tsar left in the safe-keeping of the Grand Duke of Hesse and for over fifty years the Soviet Union has only had a copy " Adam's eyes opened wide in disbelief as Romanov removed from the inside pocket of his overcoat an icon of St George and the Dragon Romanov paused and then turned it over, a smile of satisfaction crossed his face as Adam's eyes registered the significance of the missing crown

"Like you," continued Romanov, "I only have this one on loan – but you tell me where the original is and I will release you and exchange the copy for the original No one will be any the wiser and you'll still be able to make yourself a worthwhile profit."

s final years at the university he devoted his time to finding
ow he could possibly speed the whole process up. As for all
eniuses the final solution was staggering in its simplicity All
e had to produce was a chemical formula that when injected
to the nervous system caused an immediate recovery – a
pid analgesic. It took him twelve years and several deaths
fore he came up with the final solution," said Stavinsky,
moving another phial from the cigar box and plunging the
edle of a second syringe into the seal on the top of the phial.
"This," Stavinsky said, holding up the little phial in
iumph, "when injected into your blood stream, will aid
covery so quickly that you may even wonder if you ever went
rough any pain in the first place For this piece of genius
etz should have been awarded the Nobel Prize, but it was
t something we felt he could share with the rest of the
ientific world But because of him I can repeat the process
u have just experienced again and again, never permitting
u to die. You see, I can keep this generator pumping up and
wn every thirty minutes for the next week if that is your
sire," said Stavinsky, as he stared down at Adam's white,
sbelieving face flecked with yellow specks of his vomit
"Or I can stop immediately after I have administered the
tidote the moment you let me know where the Tsar's icon
"

Stavinsky stood in front of Adam and half filled the syringe
dam felt intensely cold, yet the shock of his torture had
used him to sweat profusely. "Sit still, Captain Scott, I have
desire to do you any permanent injury " Adam felt the
edle go deep in and moments later the fluid entered his
ood stream

He could not believe how quickly he felt himself recovering
ithin minutes he no longer felt sick or disorientated. The
nsation in his arms and legs returned to normal while the
sh never to experience Stage Two again became acute
"Brilliant man, Professor Metz, on that I'm sure we can
th agree," said Stavinsky, "and if he were still alive I feel
rtain he would have written a paper on your case " Slowly
d carefully Stavinsky began to smear more lumps of jelly on

Adam's chest When he was satisfied with his handiwo
once again attached the electrodes to the jelly

"*Cassiaus, Timon of Athens, Pericles*" Stavinsky thrus
palm down and Adam hoped that he would die He fo
new level to scream at, as his body shook and shook Sev
later he felt ice cold and, shivering uncontrollably, he s
to retch

Stavinsky was quickly by his side to release him. Adam
to the ground and coughed up what was left in his body W
he was only spitting. Pollard placed him back in the cha

"You must understand I can't let you die, Captain.
where is the icon?" Stavinsky shouted

In the Louvre, Adam wanted to scream, but his vo
barely came out as a whisper, the inside of his mouth fel
like sandpaper Stavinsky proceeded to fill the second syr
again and injected Adam with the fluid Once again it
only moments before the agony subsided and he felt comple
recovered.

"Ten seconds, we go again Nine, eight, seven . "

"*Cymbeline*"

" six, five, four "

"*The Winter's Tale*"

". . three, two, one "

"*The Tempest* Aahhhh," he screamed and immedia
fainted. The next thing Adam remembered was the cold wa
being poured over him by the colonel before he began to ret
again Once tied back in the chair Stavinsky thrust the syrin
into him once more, but Adam couldn't believe he would ev
recover again He must surely die, because he wanted to d
He felt the syringe jab into his flesh again

Romanov stepped forward and looking straight at Adam
said, "I feel Dr Stavinsky and I have earned a little suppe
We did consider inviting you but felt your stomach wouldn
be up to it, but when we return fully refreshed Dr Stavinsk
will repeat the entire exercise again and again until you let m
know where you have hidden the icon"

Romanov and Stavinsky left as Colonel Pollard came bac
in. Romanov and the colonel exchanged a few sentences whic

dam could not make out Then Romanov left the room, osing the door quietly behind him

Pollard came over to Adam and offered him the water ottle. Adam gulped it down and was genuinely surprised how [illegible]

[illegible]

into the chair. As he sat down Adam gripped both sides of the chair legs firmly, then with all the strength he could muster jack-knifed forward, swung the chair over his head, and brought it crashing down on top of the unsuspecting colonel Pollard collapsed in a heap, unconscious, on the floor in front of Adam and never heard him utter the words, "*Henry VIII* and *Two Noble Kinsmen* – I'll bet that's one you've never heard of, Colonel. Mind you, to be fair, not everyone thinks Shakespeare wrote it "

Adam remained on his knees over the colonel's body, wondering what his next move should be He was grateful that the soundproofed room was now working in his favour He waited for a few more seconds as he tried to measure what was left of his strength He picked up the water bottle that had been knocked over and drained it of its last drops He then crawled across to the bed and pulled on his pants and socks, shoes, and his not so white shirt, followed by his trousers He was about to put on the blazer, but found the lining had been ripped to shreds. He changed his mind and stumbled like an old man back towards the colonel, removed his Harris tweed coat and slipped it on. It was large round the shoulders but short at the hips.

Adam made his way to the door, feeling almost exhilarated He turned the handle and pulled. The door came open an inch – nothing happened – two inches – still nothing He stared through the crack but all he could see was a dark corridor As he pulled the door wide open the hinges sounded to Adam like

reen wooden gates at the front entrance were open, and every
w seconds limousines swept past him Adam looked back up
owards the front door of the Embassy and at the top of the
teps he saw a massive man, medals stretching across his
ormal dress jacket, shaking hands with each of his departing
uests Adam assumed he was the Ambassador

One or two of the guests were leaving by foot. There were
wo armed gendarmes on the gate who stood rigidly to atten
ion and saluted as each car or guest passed by

Adam waited until a vast BMW, the West German fla
fluttering on its bonnet, slowed as it passed through the gates
Using the car to shield him, Adam walked out into the centr
of the drive, then, following closely behind, walked straigh
between the guards towards the road.

"*Bonsoir*," he said lightly to the guards as the car move
forward: he was only a yard from the road "Walk," he tol
himself, "don't run. Walk, walk until you are out of the
sight." They saluted deferentially "Don't look back " Anothe
car followed him out, but he kept his eyes firmly to the front

"*Tu cherches une femme?*" a voice repeated from the shadows
a recessed doorway Adam had ended up in a badly lit one-wa
street. Several men of indeterminate age seemed to be walkin
aimlessly up and down the kerbside He eyed them wi
suspicion as he moved on through the darkness

"Wha –?" said Adam, stepping sharply into the road, h
senses heightened by the unexpected sound.

"From Britain, eh? Do you search for a girl?" The voi
held an unmistakable French accent.

"You speak English," said Adam, still unable to see th
woman clearly

"You have to know a lot of languages in my profession, *ché*
or you'd starve "

Adam tried to think coherently "How much for the night

"*Eh bien*, but it's not yet midnight," said the girl "So
would have to charge two hundred francs "

Although he had no money Adam hoped the girl might
least lead him to safety.

"You have [illegible] it [illegible]"

"[illegible]," said the girl, at last [illegible] out of the [illegible]

Adam was surprised by [illegible] at the [illegible]

"Take my arm and if you pass a gendarme we can [illegible] *[illegible]*

Adam stumbled forward

"Ah, I think you drink too much, *chéri*. Never mind, [illegible] can lean on me, yes."

"No, I'm just tired," said Adam, trying hard to keep [illegible] with her pace.

"You have been to party at Embassy, *n'est-ce pas?*"

Adam was startled.

"Don't be surprised, *chéri*. I find most of my regular [illegible] the Embassies. They can't risk to be involved in carnal affairs. *Tu comprends?*"

"I believe you," said Adam.

"My apartment is just round the corner," she assured him. Adam was confident he could get that far but he took a deep breath when they arrived at a block of flats and first saw the steps. He just managed to reach the front door.

"I live on the top of the house, *chéri*. Very nice view," [illegible] said matter-of-factly, "but I'm afraid – how you say – no lift."

Adam said nothing, but leaned against the outside wall, breathing deeply.

"You are *fatigué*," she said. By the time they had reached the second floor she almost had to drag Adam up the last [illegible] steps.

"I don't see you getting it up tonight, *chéri*," she said.

nall waist. She wore black mesh stockings and what he could ee of her legs would have normally aroused him had he been any other condition

She walked over to Adam with a slight swing of the hips, d knelt down in front of him Her eyes were a surprisingly ninous green

"Would you please give me the two hundred now?" she ked, without harshness She ran her hand along his igh

"I don't have any money," said Adam quite simply

"What?" she said, sounding angry for the first time Placing r hand in his inside pocket she removed a wallet and asked, Then what's this? I don't play the games," handing the thick allet over to Adam He opened the flap to find it was jammed ll of French francs and a few English notes Adam conuded that the colonel was obviously paid in cash for his rvices

Adam extracted two one-hundred francs and dutifully anded them over.

"That's better," she said, and disappeared into the other oom

Adam checked quickly through the wallet to discover a riving licence and a couple of credit cards in the colonel's eal name of Albert Tomkins He quickly looked around a louble bed that was wedged up against the far wall took up nost of the floor space Apart from the chair he was settled in he only other pieces of furniture were a dressing table and a iny stool with a red velvet cushion on it. A stained blue carpet covered most of the wooden floor.

To his left was a small fireplace with logs stacked neatly in one corner All Adam wished to do was fall asleep but with what strength was left in his body, he pushed himself up, wobbled over to the fireplace and hid the wallet between the logs He lurched back towards the chair and fell into it as the door reopened.

Again the girl stood in the light of the doorway but this time she wore only a pink negligée, which even in his present state Adam could see right through whenever she made the slightest

HAPTER TWENTY-ONE

hen Adam eventually awoke the sun was already shining rough the small [illegible]

[illegible] the wallet.

He sat bolt upright, gathering himself for a few moments fore standing up again and trying to walk Although he was ill unsteady it was better than he had expected It's only the covery that counts, not the speed, he thought ironically hen he reached the fireplace he fell on his knees and searched nong the logs, but the colonel's wallet was no longer there quickly as he could he went to the jacket hanging over the ck of the chair He checked in the inside pocket a pen, a lf-toothless comb, a passport, a driving licence, some other pers, but no wallet. He searched the outside pockets a nch of keys, a penknife, a few assorted coins, English and rench, but that was all that was left With a string of oaths collapsed on to the floor. He sat there for some time and dn't move until he heard a key in the lock.

The front door of the flat swung open and the girl sauntered carrying a shopping basket. She was dressed in a pretty oral skirt and white blouse that would have been suitable r any churchgoer on a Sunday morning The basket was ammed with food

"Woken up, 'ave we, *chéri*? *Est-ce-que tu prends le petit déjeuner?*"

it wo

breakfast a bit of pie? Sometimes it the
all day

"Where's my wallet?" asked Adam co

"On the table," said the girl, yawning

Adam glanced across the room, to see
wallet in the most obvious place

"It not necessary of you to ide it, it
"Because I'm a whore don't think I'm a
strode off into the kitchen, leaving the do

Adam suddenly knew how big Tom Th

"Coffee and croissants?" she shouted

"Fantastic," said Adam. He paused
stupid."

"Not to think about it," she said. "Ça s

"I still don't know your name," said Ad

"My working name is Brigitte, but as y
services last night or this morning you can
name – Jeanne."

"Can I have a bath, Jeanne?"

"The door in the corner, but don't take to
like croissants cold." Adam made his way
and found Jeanne had provided for everyth
need: a razor, shaving cream, soap, flannel,
a gross box of Durex.

After a warm bath and a shave – del
nearly forgotten – he felt almost back to
still somewhat fragile. He tucked a pink
waist before joining Jeanne in the kitchen
already laid and she was removing a warm c
oven.

"Good body," she said, turning round and
carefully. "Much better than I usually 'ave." S
down in front of him.

"You're not so bad yourself," said Adam g
the seat opposite her.

think about you." Adam spread the roll liberally with jam and didn't speak again for several seconds

"When 'ave you last eat?" asked Jeanne as he devoured the final scrap left on the plate

"Yesterday lunch But I emptied my stomach in between "

"Sick, eh? You mustn't drink so much "

"I think 'drained' might be a better word Tell me, Jeanne," said Adam, looking up at her, "are you still available for work?"

She checked her watch "One of my regulars is at two this afternoon, and I must be back on the streets by five So it would 'ave to be this morning," she said matter-of-factly

"No, no, that's not what I meant," said Adam

"You could quickly give a girl, how do you say in England? – a complex," said Jeanne "You not one of those weird ones, are you?"

"No, nothing like that," said Adam, laughing "But I would be willing to pay you another two hundred francs for your services "

"Is it legal?"

"Absolutely "

"*Alors*, that makes a change 'Ow long you need me?"

"An hour, two at the most "

"It's better than the rate for my present job What am I expected to do?"

"For one hour I want every man in Paris to fancy you Only this time you won't be available – at any price "

"Scott has just contacted me a few minutes ago," said Lawrence to the assembled D4

"What did he have to say?" asked an anxious Sir Morris

"Only that he was turning back the clock "

"What do you think he meant by that?" asked Snell

"Geneva would be my guess," said Lawrence

"Why Geneva?" said Matthews

"I'm not certain," said Lawrence, "but he said it had something to do with the German girl, or the bank, but I can't [illegible] which "

"[illegible]

Did you trace the call?" asked Finch

"Only the area," said Lawrence, "Switzerland or the German Swiss border."

"Good. Then we're in business again," said Sir Mark. "Have you informed Interpol?"

"Yes sir, and I've personally briefed the German, French and Swiss police," added Lawrence, which was the only [illegible] he had spoken since the meeting had begun.

Jeanne took forty minutes to get herself ready and when Adam saw the result he let out a long whistle.

"No one is going to give me a second look, even if I were a empty the till in front of them," he told her.

"That is the idea, *n'est ce pas?*" Jeanne said, grinning.

"Now, are you sure you know exactly what you have to do?"

"I know well." Jeanne checked herself once more in the long mirror. "We 'ave rehearse like military exercise four times already."

"Good," said Adam. "You sound as if you're ready to face the enemy. So let's begin with what in the army they call 'advance to contact'."

Jeanne took out a plastic bag from a drawer in the kitchen. The single word 'Céline' was printed across it. She handed it over to Adam. He folded the bag in four, and stuffed it into his jacket pocket before walking into the corridor. She then locked the flat door behind them, and they walked down the stairs together and out on to the pavement.

Adam hailed a taxi and Jeanne told the driver "Tuileries gardens." Once they had arrived, Adam paid the fare and joined Jeanne on the pavement.

"*Bonne chance,*" said Adam as he remained on the corner,

ks and continued watching until she was out of sight
The comments she could hear and Adam, twenty yards hind, couldn't, ranged from "*Je payerais n'importe quoi,*" which reluctantly had to pass up, to just plain '*putain*', which Adam had told her to ignore. Her part had to be acted out, d for two hundred francs she would just have to suffer the ld insult.

Jeanne reached the far side of the gardens and did not look ack she had been instructed not to turn around in any ircumstances Keep going forwards, Adam had told her He as still twenty yards behind her when she reached the Quai les Tuileries She waited for the lights to turn green before he crossed the wide road, keeping in the centre of a throng of people.

At the end of the quai she turned sharp right, and for the first time could see the Louvre straight in front of her. She had been too embarrassed to admit to him that she had never been inside the building before

Jeanne climbed the steps to the entrance hall. By the time she had reached the swing doors, Adam was approaching the bottom step. She continued on up the marble staircase with Adam still following discreetly behind

When Jeanne reached the top of the stairs she passed the statue of the Winged Victory of Samothrace She proceeded into the first of the large crowded rooms and began counting to herself, noting as she passed through each gallery that there was at least one attendant on duty in each, usually standing around aimlessly near one of the exits A group of school-children were studying 'The Last Supper' by Giovanni but Jeanne ignored the masterpiece and marched straight on After passing six attendants she arrived in the room Adam had described to her so vividly. She strode purposefully into the centre and paused for a few seconds Some of the men began to lose interest in the paintings Satisfied by the impact she was making, she flounced over to the guard, who straightened up his jacket and smiled at her

"*Dans quelle direction se trouve la peinture du seizième siècle?*" Jeanne asked innocently The guard turned to point in the

direction of the relevant room The moment he turned bac Jeanne slapped him hard across the face and shouted at he at the top of her voice "*Quelle horreur! Pour qui est-ce que vous prenez?*"

Only one person in the Icon Room didn't stop to stare the spectacle "*Je vais parler à la Direction,*" she screamed, an flounced off towards the main exit The entire charade w over in less than thirty seconds The bemused guard remain transfixed, staring after his assailant in bewilderment

Jeanne continued on through three centuries more quick than H G. Wells. She took a left turn into the sixteenth-centur room as instructed and then another left brought her back in the long corridor. A few moments later, she joined Adam a the top of the marble staircase leading down to the fron entrance.

As they walked back down the steps together, Adam hande her the Céline bag and was about to set off again, when tw attendants waiting on the bottom step threw out their arm indicating they should halt

"Do you wish a run for it?" she whispered

"Certainly not," said Adam very firmly "Just don't sa anything "

"*Madame, excusez moi, mais je dois fouiller votre sac* "

"*Allez-y pour tout ce que vous y trouvez!*" said Jeanne

"Certainly you can search her bag," said Adam, returnin to her side before Jeanne could say anything more "It's a icon, quite a good one, I think I purchased it in a shop ne the Champs-Elysées only this morning "

"*Vous me permettez, monsieur?*" the senior attendant ask suspiciously.

"Why not?" said Adam He removed the Tsar's icon fro the bag and handed it over to the attendant, who seem surprised by the way things were turning out Two mo attendants rushed over and stood on each side of Adam

The senior attendant asked in broken English if Adam would

he senior attendant was beginning to look unsure of him-
: "*Je dois vous demander de me suivre*," he suggested in a
e that was suddenly less hostile He ushered them quickly
ough to a little room at the side of the gallery The attendant
: the Tsar's icon in the middle of a table that dominated
: room. Adam sat down and Jeanne, still bemused, took the
.t beside him

"I'll only be a moment, sir " The senior attendant almost

He studied the painting carefully for some time before
e spoke Adam felt just a moment's apprehension "Most
nteresting Yes, yes " One of the attendants put a hand on
is truncheon

"Interesting," he repeated. "I would be so bold as to
uggest," he hesitated, "late nineteenth century, eighteen
eventy, possibly eighty. Fascinating. Not that we have ever
had anything c ke it at the Louvre," he added "You do
." he said as he handed the icon
icon of St George and
ace in Leningrad I've
pleased with

er his breath as he
ne old man bowed
"Funnily enough,
the Tsar's icon only

"Doing your duty," completed Adam "A natural pr
caution, if I may say so," he added a little pompously, "I ca
only admire the way you carried out the entire exercise."

Jeanne stared at them both, quite unable to comprehen
what was happening

"You are kind, *monsieur*," said the attendant, sounding re
lieved "Hope you come again," he added, smiling at Jeanne

The attendant accompanied the two of them to the entrance
of the Louvre, and when they pushed through the door he
stood smartly to attention and saluted

Adam and Jeanne walked down the steps and into the Paris
sun

"Well, now can I know what that's all about?" asked Jeanne

"You were *magnifique*," said Adam, not attempting to ex-
plain

"I know, I know," said Jeanne "But why you need Oscar-
winning show by me when the picture was always yours?"

"True," agreed Adam "But I had left it in their safe-keeping
overnight And without your bravura performance it might
have taken considerably longer to convince the authorities that
it belonged to me in the first place "

Adam realised from the look on her face that Jeanne had no
idea what he was talking about

"You know, that my first time in the Louvre?" said Jeanne

PART FOUR

THE KREMLIN
MOSCOW

June 19, 1966

CHAPTER TWENTY-TWO

THE KREMLIN, MOSCOW

June 19, 196

Leonid Ilyich Brezhnev entered the room, hardly allowin the other four members of the inner quorum of the Defenc Council enough time to stand Their faces were grim, resc lute, no different from their public image – unlike Wester politicians

The General Secretary took his place at the head of the tab and nodded to his colleagues to sit

The last time the inner quorum of the Defence Council ha been summoned to a meeting at an hour's notice had been the request of Khrushchev, who was hoping to enlist suppo for his Cuban adventure Brezhnev would never forget t moment when his predecessor had uncontrollably burst in tears because they forced him to order the Soviet ships return home From that moment, Brezhnev knew it could on *be a matter of time before he would succeed Khrushchev* the leader of the Communist world On this occasion he h no intention of bursting into tears

On his right sat Marshal Malinovsky, Minister of Defen on his left Andrei Gromyko, the young Foreign Minist Beside him sat the Chief of the General Staff, Marshal Za harov, and, on his left, Zaborski Even the seating plan co firmed Brezhnev's obvious displeasure with the Chairman the KGB

He raised his eyes and stared up at the massive oil painti of Lenin reviewing an early military parade in Red Square

"And for such a prize we would not have had to sacrifice one life, one rocket, one tank or even one bullet – because all this was ours by right. But if we fail to locate the Tsar's icon in the next thirty-six hours we will never be given such a chance again. We will have lost our one opportunity to remove a star from the American flag."

Foreign Secretary Gromyko waited until he was certain Brezhnev had completed his statement before he enquired.

"If I may ask, Comrade Chairman, why was Major Romanov allowed to continue being involved in such a sensitive operation after it was suspected he had killed" – with this he glanced down at the papers in front of him – "Researcher Petrova?"

"Because when that situation was drawn to my attention," replied Zaborski, at last looking up, "I had only seven days left to tomorrow's deadline, and in my judgment there was *no one* who could have taken over Romanov's place at such short notice –"

There was a timid knock on the door. All the faces round the table showed surprise. The Minister of Defence had given specific orders that no one was to interrupt them.

"Come," shouted Brezhnev.

The great door inched open and a secretary appeared in the gap; the thin piece of paper in his hand shook, betraying his nervousness. The Minister of Defence waved him in as Brezhnev had no intention of turning around to see who it was. The secretary walked quickly towards them. As soon as he had deposited the telex on the table he turned, and almost ran from the room.

Brezhnev slowly unfolded his tortoise-shell glasses before picking up the missive. Once he had read through the cable, he looked up at the expectant faces in front of him. "It seems an Englishman left an icon in the Louvre and picked it back up this morning."

The blood quickly drained from Zaborski's face.

The four ministers round the table all began talking together, until Brezhnev raised the vast palm of his right hand. There was immediate silence. "I intend to continue my plans on the

picture no one other than members of the politburo
since it disappeared from the Tretyakov in 1950

If only Lenin had realised the icon was a fake in t
place, Brezhnev reflected Yet, despite the traditon
sian pastime of blaming the dead for everything th
wrong, he knew that Vladimir Ilyich Lenin was beyon
cism He would have to find a living scapegoat.

His eyes rested on Zaborski "Your report, Comrade
man "

Zaborski fingered a file in front of him although he
the contents almost off by heart. "The plan to locate the
icon was carried out in an exemplary fashion," he
"When the Englishman, Adam Scott, was caught an
questioned" – they all accepted the euphemism
Comrade Dr Stavinsky in the privacy of our Embassy in
the Englishman gave no clue as to where we would fi
icon It became obvious he was a professional agent
West After three hours, interrogation was momentar
pended It was during this period that the prisoner ma
to escape "

"Managed," interjected Brezhnev

Just as he had taught his subordinates over the year
Chairman of the KGB made no attempt to reply

"Don't you realise," continued the General Secretary,
we had within our grasp the opportunity to turn the very
the Americans use for their early warning system into a
for our short range missiles? If it had proved possible to ret
our icon it would also have been possible to site those
missiles along a border less than a thousand eight hun
kilometres from Seattle – two thousand kilometres
Chicago Not only could we have made the Americans'

CHAPTER TWENTY-THREE

Adam wound down the car window and immediately the warm summer air flooded in He had decided to avoid the main road to Calais in favour of the N1 to Boulogne He still considered it possible that Romanov would have men watching at every port on the Channel coast although he doubted if Lawrence or the Americans were aware he had escaped

Once he had cleared the outskirts of the French capital, he was confident that he could average seventy kilometres an hour the rest of the way But what he hadn't anticipated was running into a hundred or more cyclists, daubed in their various stripes of reds, greens, blues, blacks and golds, bobbing along ahead of him. As he drifted past them Adam was able to accurately check that they were averaging 40 miles an hour

Having followed the build up for the forthcoming World Cup in Britain, he was also able to make out the national colours of France, Germany, Italy and even Portugal He honked his horn loudly as he passed a group of four men quite near the front, clad in red, white and blue T-shirts with the British team van driving just ahead of them A few moments later he had overtaken the leaders, and was able to put the car back into fourth gear.

He switched on the car radio and fiddled around for some before he tuned in to the Home Service of the BBC He back to listen to the news in English for the first time The usual reports of long strikes, high inflation, and chances when the second Test Match at Lord's e rest day almost made him feel he was already then he nearly swerved off the road and into

assumption that it will still be us who get
first

Brezhnev turned towards his Foreign S
our Western Ambassadors to be prepared t
Ministers of the country in which they
implications of honouring the amendment t
instruct Anatoly Dobrynin in Washingto
official meeting with the Secretary of S
w late Monday At the same time I want
rranged between our Ambassador at the U
! Thank "

Gromyko nodded as Brezhnev turned hi
Chief of the General Staff "See that our stra
ones are put at a state of readiness to coincid
f the announcement of our diplomatic initiat
nited The General Secretary finally turned
f the KGB "Do we still have advertising
very major newspaper in the West?"

"Yes, Comrade General Secretary," replied
cannot be certain they will be willing to pri
you have prepared it "

"Then pay every one of them in advance,"
Few Western editors will withdraw a full pag
hen they already have the money in the ban
"But if we then don't find the icon " began
the KGB

"Then your last duty as Chairman of Stat
be to withdraw all the advertisements," sai
Secretary of the Communist Party

"Are you sticking to the schedule you outlined on the bus?"

"Sure am. Why, are you still desperate to spend the night with me?"

"Sure am," said Adam, mimicking her "But when do you get back home?"

"The orchestra is taking the ferry from Dunkerque at six thirty tonight Can you join us?"

"No," said Adam. "I have to return by another route. But, Robin, when I reach London can you put me up for the night?"

"Sounds like an offer I can't refuse," she said, and then repeated her address to be sure he had time to write it down "When shall I expect you?" she asked

"Around midnight tonight."

"Do you always give a girl so much notice?"

The young KGB officer standing in the adjoining box had caught most of the conversation He smiled when he recalled Major Romanov's words "The man who brings me the Tsar's icon need have no fear for his future in the KGB "

Adam jumped back in the car and drove on until he reached the outskirts of Beauvais, where he decided to stop at a wayside *routier* for a quick lunch

According to the timetable he had picked up from the Hertz counter, the ferry he wanted to catch was due to leave Boulogne at three o'clock, so he felt confident he would still make it with about an hour to spare

He sat hidden in an alcove by the window enjoying what might have been described in any English pub as a ploughman's lunch. With each mouthful he became aware that the French ploughmen demanded far higher standards of their innkeepers than any English farmworker was happy to settle for.

As he waited for his coffee he took out Albert Tomkins's papers from his inside pocket and began to scrutinise them carefully. He was interested to discover that he had been a private in the Green Jackets, and exactly how many weeks he had been claiming unemployment benefit

leaving it that late Assuming we can beat him to the coast, Colonel, I think Captain Scott is once again within our grasp"

Once Adam had left the *relais routier* it was only minutes before he began to catch up with the straggling cyclists as they pedalled on towards Abbeville His thoughts reverted to Romanov Adam suspected that his agents would have the airports, stations, autoroute and ports well covered But even the KGB could not be in fifty places at once

Adam took the Boulogne route out of Abbeville but had to remain in the centre of the road to avoid the bobbing cyclists. He even had to slam his brakes on once when an Italian and a British rider collided in front of him The two men, both travelling at some speed, were thrown unceremoniously to the ground The British rider remained ominously still on the side of the road

Adam felt guilty about not stopping to help his fellow countryman but feared that any hold-up might prevent him catching his boat He spotted the British team van ahead of him and speeded up until he was alongside Adam waved at the driver to pull over

The man behind the steering wheel looked surprised but stopped and wound down the window Adam pulled up in front of him, leaped out of his car and ran to the van

"One of your chaps has had an accident about a mile back," shouted Adam, pointing towards Paris

"Thanks, mate," said the driver who turned round and sped quickly back down the road

Adam continued to drive on at a sedate speed until he had passed all the leaders Then, once again, he put the car into top gear A signpost informed him that it was now only thirty-two kilometres to Boulogne he would still make the three o'clock sailing comfortably He began to imagine what it might be like if he could survive beyond Monday Would his life ever be routine again? Jogs in the park, Foreign Office interviews, workouts with the sergeant major and even the acknowledgment of the part he had played in delivering the

Through the window of the inn he watched the first of the cyclists as they pedalled by. The athletes' muscles strained in their determination to remain among the leading group. As they shot through Beauvais, Adam was amused by the fact that they were all breaking the speed limit. The sight of the competitors reminded him that he was expected to attend the final part of his medical for the Foreign Office tomorrow afternoon.

Romanov read the decoded message a second time. "Scott returning Geneva. Check German girl and bank." He looked up at the senior KGB officer who had handed him the message.

"Does Mentor think I'm that naïve?" said Romanov to his Parisian colleague. "We already know from our agent in Amsterdam that he's now on his way towards the French coast."

"Then why should Mentor want to send you in the opposite direction?"

"Because it must be him who's been briefing the Americans," said Romanov coldly.

Romanov turned to the colonel who was standing by his side. "We know it can't be Dunkerque, so how many other possibilities are we left with?"

"Cherbourg, Le Havre, Dieppe, Boulogne, or Calais," replied the colonel, looking down at the map laid out on the table in front of him. "My bet would be Calais," he added.

"Unfortunately," said Romanov, "Captain Scott is not quite that simple. And as the motorway takes you direct to Calais, the captain will expect us to have that part of his route well covered. I think our friend will try Boulogne or Dieppe first."

He checked the timetable the Second Secretary had supplied him with. "The first boat he could hope to catch leaves [illegible] and then there's one from Dieppe

And then suddenly one of them started walking towards n, while the other remained motionless Adam knew he did not hope to escape again He knelt there cursing his own pidity. In seconds they would be able to see him clearly

'Don't let's waste any more valuable time, Marvin, we eady know that the limey bastard's heading back to Paris "

'I just thought perhaps " began the one called Marvin a Southern drawl

'Leave the thinking to me Now let's get back to the chopper ore we lose him."

When Marvin was only twenty yards away from Adam suddenly stopped, turned around and began running k.

Adam remained rooted to the spot for several minutes A d, clammy sweat had enveloped his body the moment he lised his latest pursuer was not Romanov If one of them dn't referred to him as a 'limey bastard', Adam would have ppily given himself up Suddenly he had become painfully are of the difference between fact and fiction he had been t with no friends.

Adam did not move again until he heard the helicopter rise ove him Peering out, he could see outlined against the arc the tunnel the Americans heading back in the direction of ris.

He staggered outside and put a hand across his eyes The nlight seemed much fiercer than a few minutes before. What xt? He had less than an hour to catch the boat but no longer d any transport He wasn't sure whether to thumb lifts

[illegible]

Cyclists began to pass him again as he jogged slowly towards ologne. He kept on moving, and even found enough strength cheer the British competitors as they pedalled by The tish team van followed close behind and Adam gave it the umbs-up sign. To his surprise the van came to a halt in fron him.

commercial traveller," Adam explained. Neither of
spoke. "My papers are all in order. I can assure you."
handed them over to the taller man who crossed back
road and used the car lights to study Albert Tomlin's
and insurance before carrying on a conversation with his

Adam could hear the helicopter blades whirling abo
tunnel entrance.

"We don't need the hundred francs," the taller one
eventually. "But we will need a note from you explaining
we are returning the car to Hertz in Paris on your b
Adam pulled out the colonel's pen and, feeling remar
sober, he bent over the hood of the car and scribbled a
back of the Hertz agreement.

"Do you want to come back to Paris with us?"

Adam hesitated fractionally. Couldn't they hear the
too? "No. I have to get to Boulogne."

"We could drive you to Boulogne and still have enough
to take the car to Paris."

"No, no. That's very considerate. I can take care of m
as long as I feel confident that the car will be delivered
as soon as possible."

The taller one shrugged while his companion opene
rear door and threw their rucksacks on the back seat. Ad
remained in the tunnel while they started up the engine
could hear the purr of the helicopter blades change caden
it had to be descending to land in a nearby field.

Go, go, for God's sake go, he wanted to shout as the
shot forward towards Boulogne. He watched them travel do
the road for about a hundred yards before turning in at a fa
entrance, reversing, and heading back towards the tunn
They tooted as they passed him in the dark, disappearing
the direction of Paris. Adam sank down on to his knees wi
relief and was about to pick himself up and start walki
towards Boulogne when he saw two figures silhouetted at th
far entrance of the tunnel. Against the clear blue sky he coul
make out the outline of two tall, thin men. They stood peerin
into the tunnel. Adam didn't move a muscle, praying the
hadn't spotted him.

Adam gave them the thumbs-up sign and then looked over his shoulder through the back window He was thankful to see that there was still no sign of the helicopter as they drove into the outskirts of Boulogne Bob took him all the way up to the dockside. "Hope you get that bronze medal," said Adam as he jumped out of the van "And thanks again Good luck with the next stage"

Adam checked his watch twenty minutes before the boat was due to sail. He [illegible]

wa [illegible]

bef [illegible]

che [illegible]

sho [illegible]

tick [illegible]

wh [illegible]

appeared in the distance There was no mistaking it – the sound was enough.

Adam looked up at the gangway which led to the deck of the ship now only yards away from him, and then back to the speck as it grew larger and larger in the sky He checked his watch: the ship was due to leave in twelve minutes – still time enough for his pursuers to land the helicopter and get on board. If he climbed on and the Americans followed, they were bound to discover him But if the Americans got on and he stayed off that would still give him enough time to reach Dieppe before the next sailing

Adam jogged quickly back towards the large crowd that was hanging about waiting for the start of the next stage of the road race. As he did so the hel[illegible]

The driver wound down the window. "Weren't you the fellow who stopped me back in Abbeville?"

"That's right," said Adam "Has your man recovered?"

"No, he's resting in the back – pulled ligament. What happened to your car?"

"Broke down about a mile back," said Adam, shrugging philosophically

"Bad luck Can I give you a lift?" the man asked "We're only going as far as Boulogne on this stage, but jump in if it will help "

"Thank you," said Adam, with the relief of a bearded beatnik who has found the one person willing to stop to pick him up The driver leaned across and pushed open the door for him

Before climbing in, Adam shielded his eyes and once more looked up into the sky The helicopter was nowhere to be seen – although he knew it couldn't be long before it returned They would quickly work out that there was only one place where the switch could possibly have been made

"My name's Bob," said the track-suited driver, thrusting out his free hand "I'm the British team manager "

"Mine's Adam " He shook the other's hand warmly

"Where are you heading?"

"Boulogne," said Adam, "and with luck I could still make my crossing by three."

"We should be there about two thirty," said Bob "We have to be, the afternoon stage starts at three "

"Will your man be able to ride?" asked Adam, pointing over his shoulder

"No, he won't be competing in this race again," said the team manager "He's pulled a ligament in the back of his leg, and they always take a couple of weeks to heal properly I [illegible] the left leg

CHAPTER TWENTY-FOUR

her.

"It's good to see you," he said

"I thought you were going back to England by so mysterious route, you know, spy rocket or something e more exotic."

"I wanted to," said Adam, "but the Americans were sit at the controls just as I decided to climb aboard

"The Americans?" she said

"I'll explain everything once we're on board," said Ad Neither of them noticed the young agent who had tra Robin from Berlin. He sat in a phone booth on the far sid the dock and dialled an overseas number

"I wouldn't have believed a word of it a week ago," said, "but for two things"

"Namely?"

"First, a senior official of the Foreign Office returned Du Hulme's passport to him in Amsterdam Which remind to give you yours back" She rummaged around in her ba a few moments before taking out a dark blue passport handing it to him

"And what's the second thing?" said Adam, takin passport gratefully.

Adam tried to remember the phrase

left from Dunkerque

"The number," a voice cut over the loudspeaker

"Okay," said Adam

"Good," said the team manager "Then I'll see you"

Adam ran back to the team manager as he headed towards the van

"Quatre minutes" Adam heard clearly as Bob unlocked the van and handed him the keys He stared towards the ticket office The two Americans were emerging from the ticket office

"Deux minutes"

Adam jumped up in the driver's seat looked over towards the boat and watched Martin and his colleague stride up the gangplank

"Une minute"

"Just get the van to Dunkerque and leave the keys at the British checkpoint We'll see you when we get there"

"Good luck" said Adam

"Thank you," said Bob and ran to the starting line to join his team mates who were anxiously holding his bike

"Trente secondes"

Adam watched the gangplank being hoisted up as the starter raised his gun

"On your marks" set

The ship's fog horn belched out a droning note and the two Americans started their journey to Dover A second later, the gun went off as Adam put the van into second gear and headed towards Dunkerque

to be standing by at the quayside to take him to the nearest hospital once we have docked Over "

"Message received and understood [illegible]

will be waitin [illegible]

"Everythin, [illegible]

gentle voice t [illegible]

arrive, they [illegible] going to see you are taken straight to a hospital "

"I must get back to the bridge," said the captain gruffly "I shall instruct two stewards to bring a stretcher down for your brother "

"Thank you, Captain," said Robin. "You have been most helpful "

"It's quite all right, miss You did say your brother?"

"Yes, Captain," said Robin

"Well, you might advise him in future that [illegible] interests to drin [illegible]

"I've tried," [illegible]

many times I'v [illegible]

my father " Ad [illegible] on to his leg and groaned again

"Um," said the captain, looking down at the gash across Adam's shoulder "Let's hope it turns out not to be serious Good luck," he added

"Thank you again, Captain," said Robin as she watched the cabin door close behind them

"So far, so good," said Robin "Now let's hope the second part of the plan works By the way, your breath smells foul "

"What do you expect after making me swirl whisky round in my mouth for twenty minutes and then forcing me to spit it out all over my own clothes?"

Adam was lifted carefully on to the stretcher, then carried out on to the deck by two stewards They waited at the head of the gangplank and placed Adam gently on the deck while a customs officer, accompanied by an immigration officer, ran up to join them. Robin handed over his passport. The immigration officer flicked through the pages and checked the photograph.

"Quite a good likeness for a change," said Robin, "but I'm

"Where's the car?" the Russian demanded, not taking his eye from the coach.

"I've booked one provisionally," said the colonel, "but they'll need your international licence. I forgot Scott has got mine, along with all my other papers."

"You stay put," said Romanov, "and make sure Scott doesn't try to get off that coach." Romanov ran to the Avis desk at the same time as Adam was being wheeled into a little cubicle to be examined by the duty registrar.

The young doctor leant over his patient for several minutes. He had never seen a wound quite like it before. He examined him carefully, before making any comment. "Nasty lacerations," he said finally, cleaning Adam's shoulder wound. "Can you circle your arm?" Adam turned the arm in a full circle and straightened it again. "Good. No break, at least." He continued to clean the wound.

"I'm going to put some iodine on the open cut and it may sting a little," said the doctor. He cleaned up both elbows before placing a plaster on them.

"That didn't happen today, did it?" he asked, staring at Adam's half-healed shoulder.

"No," said Adam, without offering any explanations.

"You have been in the wars lately. I'm going to give you an anti-tetanus injection." Adam turned white. "Funny how many grown men don't care for the sight of a needle," said the doctor. Adam groaned.

"Now that wasn't so bad, was it?" he coaxed as he placed a large bandage over the top of the shoulder. "Do you have someone to collect you?" the doctor asked finally.

"Yes, thank you," said Adam. "My wife is waiting for me."

"Good, then you can go now, but please report to your GP the moment you get back home."

Romanov sat in the driver's seat and watched the coach clear customs. He followed it out of the main gate and on to the A2 in the direction of London.

"Are we going to intercept them on the way?" asked Pollard nervously.

the next station. She threw back the blanket and revealed the deep gash on Adam's shoulder. Adam looked suitably crestfallen.

"Is he bringing anything in with him that needs to be declared?" asked the customs official. Adam couldn't restrain himself from touching the icon.

"No. I wouldn't let him buy any more booze on this trip. And I'll be responsible for checking his personal belongings through with mine when I leave the ship."

"Right. Thank you, miss. Better see he gets off to the hospital then," said the officer, suddenly aware that a restless mob of people were waiting at the top of the gangplank to disembark.

The two stewards carried Adam down the gangplank. An attendant was on hand to check his wound. Adam waved gamely at Robin as they placed him in the ambulance.

Romanov spotted her as she came through customs. "Now I know exactly how Captain Scott hopes to get off the ship and we will be waiting for him when he least expects it. Go and hire a car to take us to London," he barked at the colonel.

The ambulance [illegible] gates with its [illegible] beginning to feel that the captain might have exaggerated the scale of the emergency.

Romanov stood by the gate and smiled as he watched the coach carrying the musicians emerge from the deep black hole of the ship and take its turn in the queue for customs.

As Romanov's eyes ranged up and down the coach he [illegible]

"You won't pull that one on me a second time," Romanov muttered, just as the colonel appeared by his side, red in the face.

"I agree, Terry," said his mate who was sitting next to Adam and also began imitating the sniff "And I think it's quite close to me" Adam glanced towards the young man whose black leather jacket was covered in small shiny studs The words 'Heil Hitler' were printed right across his back He got up and pulled open the window "Perhaps some fresh air will help," he said as he sat back down In moments all four of them were sniffing "Sniff, sniff, sniff, sniff, I think the smell's getting worse," their leader concluded

"It must be me," said Adam

The sniffing stopped and the youths stared towards the corner in disbelief – momentarily silenced by Adam's offensive

"I didn't have time to take a shower after my judo lesson," Adam added before any of them had found time to recover their speech.

"Any good at judo, are you?" asked the one sitting next to him

"Passable," said Adam

"What belt are you?" demanded Terry belligerently "Go on, tell me, a black belt, I knew it," he added, sniggering

"I haven't been a black belt for nearly eight years," said Adam casually, "but I've been recently awarded my second Dan"

A look of apprehension came over three of the four faces

"I was thinkin' about taking up judo myself," continued the leader, straightening his arm "How long does it take to get any good at it?"

"I've been working at it three hours a day for nearly twelve years and I'm still not up to Olympic standard," replied Adam as he watched the dark-haired man in the duffle coat pass by the compartment again This time he stared directly at Adam before quickly moving on

"Of course," continued Adam, "the only quality you really need if you are thinking of taking up judo seriously is nerve, and no one can teach you that You've either got it or you haven't."

"I've got nerve," said Terry belligerently "I'm not frigh-

A few minutes later Adam slipped out of the compartment, ving the door wide open. He started to walk slowly in the ection opposite to that in which the man in the blue duffle at had last been seen going. When Adam reached the end the carriage, he turned to find the man was now following uckly behind. As he passed the open compartment the man lled and raised a hand to attract Adam's attention but two ather-clad arms shot out and the man disappeared inside the mpartment with a muffled cry. The door was slammed and e blinds pulled quickly down.

The train drew slowly into Waterloo East station.

obin remained tense as the bus drew into Wigmore Street nd came to a halt outside the RPO headquarters. A dark reen Ford had been following them for at least thirty miles, nd once she had become aware of it she had not dared to ove from her seat.

As she dragged her double bass off the bus she looked back o see that the Ford had stopped about fifty yards down the oad and turned off its headlights. Romanov was standing on he pavement looking like a caged animal that wanted to pring. Another man that Robin did not recognise remained eated behind the wheel. Adam had warned her not to turn round at any time but to walk straight into the RPO headquarters without stopping. Even so, she couldn't resist looking Romanov in the eye and shaking her head. Romanov continued o stare impassively ahead of him.

When the last musician had left the bus Romanov and 'th Colonel' searched up and down the inside of the vehicle an then finally the trunk, despite noisy protests from the driver Robin eyed them nervously from an upstairs window, as th two of them jumped back into the green Ford and drove of She continued watching the car until the back lights had fade away in the darkness.

The colonel swung out of Wigmore Street towards Bak Street, bringing the car to a halt opposite Baker Street statio Romanov jumped out, walked into a vacant telephone boo

The taxi drew up outside the house that Robin pointed to e then jumped out and tipped the cabbie extra because the witching hour had long passed and at last she felt safe. seemed ages since she had been home All she was looking ward to now was a hot bath and a good night's sleep.

Iam stepped off the train at Waterloo East a little after idnight and was pleased to find the underground was still nning He had avoided going on to Charing Cross, as he uldn't be sure which side would have a reception committee iting for him. He produced a season ticket for the West dian on the ticket barrier and waited around on the under-ound platform for some time before the train eventually drew

There were several stations between Waterloo and his desti-ation, and even at this time of night there seemed to be a olonged stop at every one. Several late-night revellers got in the Embankment, more still at Leicester Square Adam aited nervously at each station, now aware that he must have ught the last train. He only hoped Robin had carried out

ecause there was no one else around to ask the way at that me of night. He moved slowly towards number twenty-three here were no lights on in the house He opened the swinging ate and walked straight up the path, removed the bunch of eys from his pocket, putting the Chubb one in the lock. Adam ushed open the door cautiously and then closed it noiselessly ehind him.

A little after twelve ten the last train from Dover pulled into Charing Cross station As Adam was nowhere to be seen, Lawrence instructed his driver to take him back to Cheyne Walk. He couldn't understand why the agent whom he had

CHAPTER TWENTY-FIVE

He pushed open the swinging gate and made his way slowly up the path in the pitch darkness Once he reached the corner of the house he searched for the third stone on the left. When he located the correct stone where he always left his spare key, he pulled it up with his fingers and felt around in the dirt. To his relief the key was still in place. Like a burglar he pushed it into the lock quietly

He crept into the hall and closed the door behind him, switched the light and began to climb the stairs. Once he had reached the landing he switched off the hall light, turned the knob of his bedroom door and pushed

As he stepped in an arm circled his throat like a whiplash and he was thrown to the ground with tremendous force. He felt a knee pressed hard against his spine and his arm was jerked up behind his back into a half nelson He lay on the floor, flat on his face, hardly able to move or even breathe The light switch flashed on and the first thing Adam saw was the colonel.

"Don't kill me, Captain Scott sir, don't kill me," he implored.

"I have no intention of doing so, Mr Tomkins," said Adam calmly. "But first, where is your esteemed employer at this moment?"

Adam kept his knee firmly in the middle of the colonel's back and pressed his arm a few inches higher before the colonel bleated out, "He went back to the Embassy once he realised the girl wasn't going to return to the flat."

"Just as I planned," said Adam, but he didn't lessen the pressure on the colonel's arm as he described in vivid detail everything that would now be expected of him

The colonel's face showed disbelief. "But that will be very tide," he said. "I mean, he's bound to end – Ahhh."

The colonel felt his arm forced higher up his back. "I could carry out the whole exercise in less than ten minutes and he need never be any the wiser," said Adam. "However I feel that it's only fair that you should be rewarded for your effort."

"Thank you, sir," said the fawning colonel.

"If you succeed in delivering the one item I require and carry out my instructions to the letter you will be given in exchange your passport, driving licence, papers, wallet and guarantee of no prosecution for your past treachery. But if, on the other hand, you fail to turn up by nine thirty tomorrow morning with the object of my desire," said Adam, "all those documents will be placed thirty minutes later on the desk of Mr Lawrence Pemberton of the FO, along with my report on your other sources of income which you have failed to declare on your tax return."

"You wouldn't do that to me, would you, Captain Scott?"

"As ten o'clock chimes," said Adam.

"But think what would then happen to me, Captain Scott, sir, if you carried out such a threat," moaned the colonel.

"I have already considered that," said Adam, "and I have come to two conclusions."

"And what are they, Captain Scott?"

"Spies," continued Adam, not loosening his grip, "at the present time seem to be getting anything from eighteen to forty-two years at Her Majesty's pleasure, so you might, with good behaviour, be out before the turn of the century, just in time to collect your telegram from the Queen."

The colonel looked visibly impressed. "And the other conclusion?" he blurted out.

"Oh, simply that you could inform Romanov of my nocturnal visit and he in return would arrange for you to spend the rest of your days in a very small dacha in a suitably undesirable suburb of Moscow. Because, you see, my dear Tomkins, you are a very small spy. I personally am not sure when left with such an alternative which I would view with more horror."

"I'll get it for you, Captain Scott, you can rely on me"

"I'm sure I can, Tomkins Because if you were to let Romanov into our little secret, you would be arrested within minutes So at best, you could try to escape on the Aeroflot flane to Moscow. And I've checked, there isn't one until the early evening."

"I'll bring it to you by nine thirty on the dot, sir. You can be sure of that. But for God's sake have yours ready to exchange"

"I will," said Adam, "as well as all your documents, Tomkins"

Adam lifted the colonel slowly off the ground and then shoved him towards the landing He switched on the light and then pushed the colonel on down the stairs until they reached the front door.

"The keys," said Adam

"But you've already got my keys, Captain Scott, sir"

"The car keys, you fool"

"But it's a hire car, sir," said the colonel

"And I'm about to hire it," said Adam

"But how will I get myself back to London in time, sir?"

"I have no idea, but you still have the rest of the night to come up with something You could even walk it by then The keys," Adam repeated, jerking the colonel's arm to shoulder-blade level.

"In my left hand pocket," said the colonel, almost an octave higher.

Adam put his hand into the colonel's new jacket and pulled out the car keys.

He opened the front door, shoved the colonel on to the path, and then escorted him to the pavement

"You will go and stand on the far side of the road," said Adam, "and you will not return to the house until I have reached the end of the road Do I make myself clear, Tomkins?"

"Abundantly clear, Captain Scott, sir"

"Good," said Adam releasing him for the first time, "and just one more thing, Tomkins. In case you think of double-crossing me, I have already instructed the Foreign Office to

place Romanov under surveillance and put two extra lookers near the Soviet Embassy with instructions to report the moment anyone suspicious turns up or leaves before nine tomorrow morning." Adam hoped he sounded convincing.

"Thought of everything, haven't you, sir?" said the colonel mournfully.

"Yes, I think so," said Adam. "I even found time to disconnect your phone while I was waiting for you to return." Adam pushed the colonel across the road before getting into the hire car. He wound the window down. "See you at nine thirty tomorrow morning. Prompt," he added, as he put the Ford into first gear.

The colonel stood shivering on the far pavement, nursing his right shoulder, as Adam drove to the end of the road. He was still standing there when Adam took a left turn back towards the centre of London.

For the first time since Heidi's death, Adam felt it was Romanov who was on the run.

"What a great honour for our little establishment," said Herr Bischoff, delighted to see the most important banker in the East sitting in his boardroom sharing afternoon tea.

"Not at all, my dear Bischoff," said Poskonov. "After all these years the honour is entirely mine. And kind of you to be so understanding about opening the bank on a Sunday. But now to business. Did you manage to get Romanov to sign the release form?"

"Oh, yes," said Bischoff, matter-of-factly. "He did it without even reading the standard clauses, let alone the extra three you asked us to put in."

"So his inheritance automatically returns to the Russian state?"

"That is so, Mr Poskonov, and we in return . . ."

". . . will represent us in all the currency exchange transactions we carry out in the West."

"Thank you," said Herr Bischoff. "And we shall be delighted to assist you in your slightest requirement, but what

now what has become of his inheritance?" asked the chairman of the bank anxiously.

"He will not return," the Russian banker said emphatically. "You can have my word on it. Now, I would like to see what is in those boxes."

"Yes, of course," said Herr Bischoff. "Will you please accompany me?"

The two banking chairmen took the private lift to the basement and Herr Bischoff accompanied his guest to the underground vault.

"I will unlock the five boxes now in your name with the bank's key but only you can open them with your key."

"Thank you," said Poskonov, and left Herr Bischoff to open the five locks and return to the entrance of the vault.

"Do take as long as you like," said Herr Bischoff, "but at six o'clock the great door is automatically locked until nine o'clock tomorrow morning, and nothing less than a nuclear weapon would prise it open. At five forty-five, an alarm goes off to warn you that you only have fifteen minutes left."

"Excellent," said the man who through his entire banking career had never been given a fifteen-minute warning of anything [illegible]

Herr Bischoff handed Comrade Poskonov the envelope with Romanov's key inside it.

As soon as the massive steel door had been swung closed behind him the Russian checked the clock on the wall. They had left him with over two hours to sort out what could be transported to Brazil and what would have to be left behind. A state pension and the Order of Lenin (second class) hadn't seemed much of an alternative to Poskonov.

He turned the key and opened the first of the small boxes and found the deeds to lands the State had owned for decades. He growled. The second box contained the shares of companies once brilliantly [illegible]

these years to discover the stories the old man had told him of

[illegible] already removed them.

[illegible] opened the first of the large boxes and [illegible] shown at the rather little compartments. He removed the [illegible] of the box [illegible], and when he saw the array of [illegible] and saw that those in front of him had kept his word [illegible] both hands into the box and let the gems slip through [illegible] fingers like a child playing with pebbles on a beach.

The second box produced pearls and the third gold [illegible] and necklaces that could make even an old man's [illegible] sparkle. He hadn't realized how long it had taken him to [illegible] through the remaining boxes but when the alarm went off he [illegible] was five thousand miles away already enjoying his new found wealth. He glanced at the clock. He had easily enough time to get everything back into the compartments and then he would return the following day and remove once and for all what he had earned from fifty years of serving the State.

When the last lid had been placed back on he checked the clock on the wall: six minutes to six. Just enough time to glance at the other box and see if he could expect the same again.

He turned the key and licked his lips in anticipation as he pulled the large box out. Just a quick look, he promised himself, as he lifted the lid. When he saw the decaying body with its grey skin and eyes hanging in their sockets he reeled backwards from the sight and, falling to the floor, clutched his heart.

Both bodies were discovered at nine the next morning.

The phone rang and Adam grabbed at it before the shrill tone could deafen him a second time.

"Your alarm call, sir," said a girl's voice gently. "It's eight o'clock."

"Thank you," Adam replied and replaced the receiver. The call had proved unnecessary because he had been sitting up and considering the implications of his plan for nearly an hour. Adam had finally worked out exactly how he was going to kill Romanov.

He jumped out of bed, threw back the curtains and stared

down at the Soviet Embassy He wondered how long t
Russian had been awake.

He returned to the side of the bed and picked up the pho
to dial the number Robin had given him The phone ra
several times before it was answered by an elderly voice sayin
"Mrs Beresford."

"Good morning, Mrs Beresford My name is Adam Sco
I'm a friend of Robin's I was just phoning to check that s
reached home safely last night."

"Oh, yes, thank you," said Robin's mother "It was
pleasant surprise to see her before the weekend She usua
spends the night in the flat when she gets back that late. I
afraid she's still asleep Would you like me to wake her?"

"No, no, don't disturb her," said Adam "I only rang to
up a lunch date Can you tell her I'll call back later?"

"I certainly will," she replied "Thank you for phoning, I
Scott."

Adam replaced the receiver and smiled Each piece of t
jigsaw was fitting neatly into place but without the colone
help he still lacked the vital corner-piece Adam began to p
everything Tomkins needed, including his passport, perso
papers and wallet into a large envelope He removed the ic
from his jacket pocket, turned it over and carefully examin
the little silver crest of the Tsar He then flicked open
colonel's penknife and began the slow and delicate task

[illegible]

[illegible]

[illegible]

Everyone was in their place for the D-1 meeting at nine and Busch had gone on the attack even before Lawrence had the chance to sit down

"How in hell did you manage to lose him this time?"

"I must take the blame myself," said Lawrence "We every port from Newhaven to Harwich covered, bu moment my man saw Romanov and his henchman leav quayside at Dover and chase off down the motorway afte coach he assumed he must have seen Scott. I had als instructed the senior immigration officer at the port, continued, "to allow Scott to disembark without a fuss. I been my intention to take over once he passed through cus There seemed no reason to change that plan while we Romanov under close surveillance Scott then proceed fool both Romanov and our man at Dover"

"But we were given a second chance when Scott got o train," persisted Busch Lawrence stared at the Ame waiting to see if he would admit that his two CIA agents also lost Scott at Dover

"My man was on the train," said Lawrence emphati but had only the one opportunity to make contact with while he was on his own, and at just that moment he grabbed and badly beaten up by a bunch of drunken lo teenagers, apparently – who were on their way back fr day trip to the seaside."

"Perhaps we're recruiting our agents from the wrong of person," said Matthews, staring down at his briefing pa

Lawrence made no attempt to reply.

"So, as far as we can tell, Scott, the Tsar's icon and Rom are still holed up somewhere in London?" said Snell.

"It looks that way," admitted Lawrence

"Perhaps all is not lost then," suggested Snell, "Scott still try and get in touch with you again"

"I think not," said Lawrence quietly

"How can you be so sure?" asked Busch.

"Because Scott knows that one of us in this room is a tr and he thinks it's me."

Romanov turned back to the KGB agent. "What's the traffic like in London on a Friday morning?"

"One of the busiest times in the week Why do you ask?"

"Because I'll need a motorbike and a superb driver," was all Romanov said

Adam could do nothing about the middle-aged lady who was now occupying his phone booth. He had nervously walked out to check the bridge when she slipped in She must have been puzzled as to why the young man didn't use the empty box that stood next to it.

He checked his watch anxiously- ten forty-five He knew he couldn't risk waiting a minute after eleven but was confident that Romanov would have traced where he'd made the call from long before then

The talkative woman was another twelve minutes before she eventually put the phone down. When she stepped out of the box she gave Adam a warm smile

Three more minutes and he would have to phone Lawrence and abort his original plan He began to watch the Beefeaters as they patrolled under Traitors' Gate Traitors' Gate – how appropriate, Adam thought He had chosen the spot because he could see clearly up and down the path leading to the drawbridge and felt he could not be taken by surprise And in desperation there was always the moat that surrounded them on all sides

For the first time in his life, Adam discovered exactly how long five minutes could be When the phone rang, it sounded like an alarm bell He picked it up nervously, his eyes never leaving the main road

"Scott?"

"Yes"

"I can now see you clearly as I am less than one minute away. I will be standing at the end of the bridge until the end of that minute Be sure you're there with the icon If you're not, I shall burn the papers that prove your father's innocence in front of you"

The phone went dead

n on the other side of the bridge and placed his icon in
ddle of it.

oss slowly," called Adam The two men moved sideways
cross the bridge, never getting closer than a couple of
from each other until they had come to a halt at each
icon. The moment the painting was within his reach,
nov grabbed it, ran and jumped on to the motorcycle
t looking back Within seconds the BMW had disap-
into the dense traffic.

m did not move Although it had only been out of his
r just over an hour, he was relieved to have the original
Adam checked the papers that would establish his
s innocence and placed them in his inside pocket Ignor-
e tourists, some of whom had stopped to stare at him,
began to relax when suddenly he felt a sharp prod in
ddle of his back. He jumped round in fright
tle girl was staring up at him
ll you and your friend be performing again this morn-

the BMW motorcycle drew up outside the Soviet Em-
n Kensington Palace Gardens, Romanov leapt off and
the steps and straight into the Ambassador's office
t knocking The Ambassador didn't need to ask if he
en successful

worked out just as I planned He was taken completely
orise," said Romanov, as he handed the icon over to the
ssador

Ambassador turned the painting over and saw the little
rown of the Tsar Any doubts that he might have had
lso dispelled

have orders to send the icon to Washington in the
atic pouch immediately There is no time to be lost "
ish I could deliver it in person, ' said Romanov
satisfied, Comrade Major, that you have carried out
art of the operation in an exemplary fashion "

Ambassador pressed a button on the side of his desk.
en appeared immediately One held open the diplo-

have some strange ideas about how to keep their party going."

anov laughed "To Alente," he said [illegible]

He is also setting up a press conference at the Embassy v that meeting It may amuse you to know that President hnson had to cancel his visit to Texas this weekend requested that the networks should allow him to 'his fellow Americans' at peak time on Monday as a of national importance"

we achieved it with only hours to spare," said ov, pouring himself another vodka

ch and go, as the English would say Let us also be l for the time difference between here and the United ecause without that we would never have been able to deadline."

nov shuddered at the thought of how close it had been vned his second vodka in one gulp

must join me for lunch, Comrade Although your [illegible]

arged into Lawrence's office

anov's got the icon," he shouted

nce's jaw dropped A look of desperation appeared on "How can you be so sure?" he demanded

just had a message from Washington The Russians

Once the coffee had been cleared away, Romanov checked his watch. He had left easily enough time to keep the appointment and still catch his plane. He thanked the Ambassador for all his help, left him, ran down the Embassy steps and climbed into the back of the anonymous black car.

The driver moved off without speaking as he had already been briefed as to where the major wanted to go

Neither of them spoke on the short journey, and when the driver drew into Charlotte Street he parked the car in a lay-by. Romanov stepped out, walked quickly across the road to the door he was looking for and pressed the buzzer.

"Are you a member?" said a voice through the intercom.

"Yes," said Romanov, who heard a metallic click as he pushed the door open and walked down the dark staircase. Once he had entered the club it took a few seconds for his eyes to become accustomed to the light. But then he spotted Mentor seated on his own at a little table near a pillar in the far corner of the room.

Romanov nodded and the man got up and walked across the dance floor and straight past him Romanov followed as the member entered the only lavatory. Once inside, Romanov checked that they were alone. Satisfied, he led them both into a little cubicle and slipped the lock to engaged. Romanov removed the thousand pounds from his pocket and handed it over to the man who sat down on the lavatory seat. Mentor greedily ripped open the packet, leaned forward and began to count. He never even saw Romanov straighten his fingers, and when the hand came down with a crushing blow on the back of Mentor's neck he slumped forward and fell to the ground in a heap

Romanov yanked him up, it took several seconds to gather the ten-pound notes that had fallen to the floor Once he had all hundred, he stuffed them into the member's pocket. Romanov then undid the member's fly buttons one by one and pulled down his trousers until they fell around his ankles He lifted the lid and placed the man on the lavatory seat. The final touch was to pull his legs as wide open as the fallen trousers would allow, the feet splayed apart. Romanov then

slipped under the large gap at the bottom of the door lever the cubicle locked from the inside. He quickly checked his handiwork. All that could be seen from the outside was the splayed legs and fallen trousers.

Sixty seconds later, Romanov was back in the car on his way to Heathrow.

Adam arrived at Heathrow two hours before the Aeroflot flight was due to depart. He stationed himself with a perfect view of the forty yard stretch Romanov would have to walk to board the Russian aircraft. He felt confident he would never reach the Aeroflot steps.

Romanov checked in at the BEA desk a little after six. He couldn't resist taking the BEA flight rather than Aeroflot even though he knew Zaborski would frown at such arrogance; he doubted if anyone would comment on this of all days.

Once he had been given his boarding card, he took the escalator to the executive lounge and sat around waiting to be called. It was always the same – the moment any operation had been completed, all he wanted to do was get home. He left his seat to pour himself some coffee and, passing a table in the centre of the room, caught the headline on the London *Evening Standard*: Exclusive: 'Johnson Texas Weekend Cancelled – Mystery.' Romanov grabbed the paper from the table and read the first paragraph but it contained no information he couldn't have already told them. None of the speculation in the paragraphs that followed even began to get near the truth.

about two hours Romanov would arrive back in Moscow we
in time to see Dynamo play Spartak at the Lenin Stadium o
Tuesday. He wondered if they would announce his arrival
the crowd over the loudspeakers as they always did when
member of the Politburo attended a match. Romanov walke
up the steps and on board, stepping over the feet of th
passenger placed next to him, thankful that he had been give
the window seat.

"Would you care for a drink before take-off?" the stewarde
asked.

"Just a black coffee for me," said his neighbour. Roman
nodded his agreement.

The stewardess arrived back a few minutes later with th
two coffees and helped the man next to Romanov pull o
his table from the armrest. Romanov flicked his over as th
stewardess passed him his coffee

He took a sip but it was too hot so he placed it on the tab
in front of him. He watched his neighbour take out a pack
of saccharines from his pocket and flick two pellets into th
steaming coffee

Why did he bother, thought Romanov Life was too shor

Romanov stared out of the window and watched the Aerofl
plane start to taxi out on to the runway He smiled at th
thought of how much more comfortable his own flight wou
be. He tried his coffee a second time just as he liked it H
took a long gulp and began to feel a little drowsy which h
didn't find that strange as he had hardly slept for the la
week.

He leaned back in his seat and closed his eyes He wou
now take every honour the State could offer him With Valch
conveniently out of the way, he could even position himself
take over from Zaborski. If that failed, his grandfather had l
him another alternative.

He was leaving London with only one regret he had fail
to kill Scott. But then he suspected that the Americans wou
take care of that. For the first time in a week he didn't ha
to stop himself falling asleep

A few moments later the passenger seated next to Roman

[illegible]

[illegible]

"Can I help?" she asked, smiling.

"No, thank you." All he said was that he did not want to be disturbed during the flight as he had had a very hard week.

"Of course, sir," said the stewardess. "We'll be taking off in a few minutes," she added and picked up the two coffee cups and whisked them away.

The man tapped his fingers impatiently on the table. At last the chief steward appeared at his side.

"There's been an urgent call from your office, sir. You've to return to Whitehall immediately."

"I had been half expecting it," he admitted.

Adam stared up at the Russian plane as it climbed steadily and swung in a semi-circle towards the East. He couldn't understand why Romanov hadn't boarded it. Surely he wouldn't have taken the BEA flight. Adam slipped back into the shadows the moment he saw him. He stared in disbelief. Lawrence was striding back across the tarmac, a smile of satisfaction on his face.

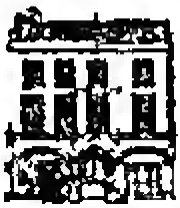
EPILOGUE

SOTHEBY'S NEW BOND STREET, LONDON W1

October 18, 1966

EPILOGUE

SOTHEBY'S
FOUNDED 1744



SOTHEBY'S
NEW BOND STREET,
LONDON W1

"All I can tell you is that one of Lawrence's old team was 'retired early'," said Adam

"Was that also true of Romanov?" asked Robin, still desperately trying to discover all that had taken place since they had last met.

"Thirteen thousand," said the auctioneer, his eyes returning to the lady on the centre aisle

"After all he can't have survived for long once they discovered you had done a switch that gave the Russians back the copy while Romanov ended up presenting you with the original," said Robin

"He's never been heard of since," admitted Adam innocently.

"And all our information leads us to believe that his boss Zaborski is soon to be replaced by someone called Yuri Andropov"

"Fourteen thousand," said the auctioneer, his eye settling on the gentleman at the front once again

"What happened when you produced the papers proving that it was not your father who had smuggled the poison into Goering's cell?"

"Once they had been authenticated by the Russians," Adam said, "Lawrence paid an official visit to the Colonel of the Regiment and furnished him with the conclusive evidence"

"Any reaction?" probed Robin

"They're going to hold a memorial service in Pa's memory and have commissioned some fellow called Ward to paint his portrait for the regimental mess Mother has been invited to unveil it in the presence of all those officers who served with my father"

"Fourteen thousand for the first time then," said the auctioneer raising the little gavel a few inches in the air

"She must have been over the moon," said Robin

"Burst into tears," said Adam "All she could say was 'I wish Pa could have lived to see it' Ironic, really If only he had opened that letter"

"Fourteen thousand for the second time," said the auctioneer, the gavel now hovering